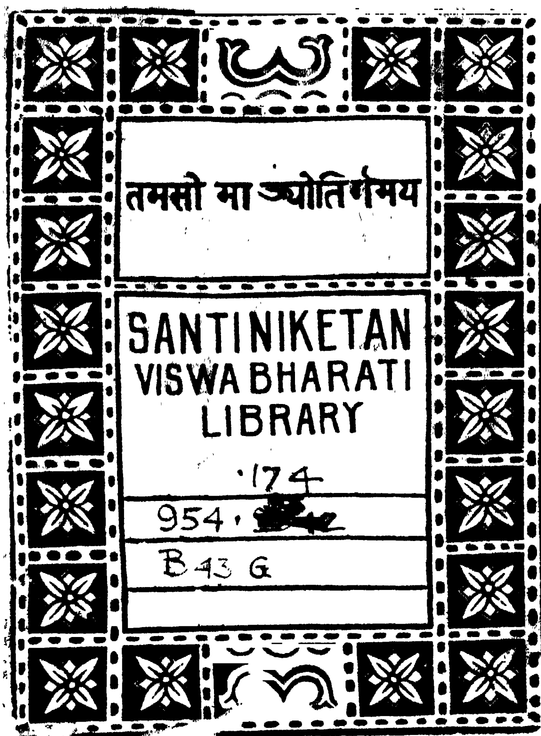


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INDIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

INDIAN HISTORY SERIES—NO. 1

GAYĀ AND BUDDHA-GAYĀ

[EARLY HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND]

VOLUME I

BOOK I

BY

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"BARHUT INSCRIPTIONS", AND "OLD BRAHMI
INSCRIPTIONS IN THE UDAYAGIRI
AND KHANDAGIRI CAVES."

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ERRATA

P. 17, l. 26—Read *Pippal* for *Peepul*.
P. 33, l. 19— ,, 4. for 3.
P. 114, l. 25— ,, *may* for *nay*.
P. 129, l. 18— ,, *The* for *the*.
P. 129, l. 20— ,, *years'* for *year*.
P. 193, l. 4— ,, *Aśvattha* for *Avattha*.
P. 215, l. 23, f. n. 3—Note that *katika-vattaṃ* occurs as a variant of *kattika-vattaṃ*, and that *katika-vatta* means not *Kṛittikā-vrata* but an expiatory rite in fulfilment of a voluntarily accepted term of atonement.
P. 218, l. 11—Read *Buddha* for Budda.
P. 222, l. 25— ,, *question* for *qestion*.
P. 232, l. 1— ,, 232 for 272.
P. 241, l. 1— ,, 241 for 242
P. 252, f. n. 2— ,, Bhagavadgītā, X, 26 :

ABBREVIATIONS

AV = Atharva-Veda
IA = Indian Antiquary.
JASB = Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JBORS = Journal, Behar and Orissa Research Society.
MRE = Minor Rock Edict.
PE = Pillar Edict. 8
RE = Rock Edict.
RV = Rig-Veda.

BOOK I

PRE-BUDDHISTIC HISTORY OF GAYĀ

आब्रह्मस्तम्बपर्य्यन्तं देवर्षि-पितृमानवाः
तृप्यन्तु पितरः सर्व्वे मातृमातामहादयः ।
अतीत-कुल-कोटिनां सप्तद्वीप-निवासिनां
आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकादिदमस्तु तिलोदकम् ॥

PREFACE

The birth-story of this monograph on Gayā and Buddha-Gayā will, I think, repay a brief narration. In October, 1928, I agreed to accompany my aunt (father's younger brother's wife), late lamented Sasikumari Barua, with my wife and children, while she would go on pilgrimage to Gayā, Benares and Kusīnārā. During our short stay at Bodh-Gayā Rai Saheb Upendra Nath Sen, the P. W. D. Officer then in charge of the Bodh-Gayā temple and its sacred area, took me round the great shrine and wanted me to explain to him the significance of the various bas-reliefs on the lingering remains of the old Stone-railing which appeared to be a memorable erection of the Noble Lady and Matron Kuraṅgi, the wife of King Kauśikīputra Indrāgnimitra. As we went round this ancient railing, the symbolical representations in duplicates of some six or seven signs of the Solar Zodiac attracted and deeply engaged my attention. The Rai Saheb had then with him no other literature on the subject than Dr. Rajendralala Mitra's *Buddha Gayā* to guide me in my study of these figures. I was very much pained indeed to find that Dr. Mitra had not paid sufficient attention to these figures and especially to think that the clear testimony in stone of a known date was not availed of by the writers on Indian astronomy in discussing the antiquity of the age when the Hindus might be supposed to have been familiar with the twelve signs of the Solar Zodiac as distinguished from the twenty-seven or twenty-eight constellations of the Lunar Zodiac. The good Rai Saheb re-

peatedly urged me to publish a paper on this very subject, and this served as the first impulse to writing something on a theme connected with the holy region of Gayā.

As I was till then toiling with my work—*Old Brāhmī Inscriptions in the Udayagiri and Khaṇḍagiri Caves*, I could not solely devote myself to the new task imposed upon me. I utilised nevertheless part of my leisure time at Benares in reading the extant literature on Gayā and Buddha-Gayā, especially in examining the inscriptions and carvings on the ancient railing at Bodh-Gayā. I am very much indebted to the authorities of the Calcutta University Library, the Bengal Asiatic Society Library and the Chandernagore Public Library for their courtesy in furnishing me with the books of reference that I needed for the purpose. The desultory reading of literature and occasional examination of the plates did not bear much fruit; the utmost that I achieved then being a clear prospect of offering corrected readings of some of the Bodh-Gayā railing inscriptions and satisfactorily identifying some of the Jātaka illustrations and some of the figures of the gods and demi-gods.

I returned to Calcutta in November to see the whole of my critical edition of the inscribed records of the Orissan caves of the Jains in print. From December, 1928, I took up the present work in right earnest, making up my mind to remain content with a short monograph on the old Shrines at Bodh-Gayā, particularly the ancient Stone-railing, its inscriptions and bas-reliefs. It took me some six months to complete this portion of the work. The beautiful album published by Messrs. Johnston Hoffman on the Bodh-Gayā temple and the old Stone-railing proved highly useful to me.

But I did not like the idea of publishing a mere descriptive account of the ancient monuments at Bodh-Gayā; a connected historical narrative of Gayā and Buddha-Gayā was wanted to give completeness and add gravity to the monograph. And it is precisely with this end in view that I approached the authorities of the Post-Graduate Department of the University of Calcutta to depute me to Gayā for a first hand study of the holy land, its natural features and numerous shrines during the closing month of the summer vacation. While I take this opportunity of expressing my debt of gratitude to my esteemed colleagues in the Post Graduate Department for their ready response to my wish, I can never forget the sense of awe I felt as I passed from hill to hill and from shrine to shrine, as I stood confronted by the wide expanse of the sandy bed of the Phalgu, or as I walked up and down along the bank of the Phalgu and the Nairañjanā to inspect the various ancient sites of importance to the Hindus and the Buddhists. Mr. Narayan Chandra De, the ex-Mayor of Chandernagore and the Librarian of the Chandernagore Public Library, and two other friends accompanied me and rendered every possible assistance in surveying the holy land, and but for their antiquarian zeal it would not have been possible for me to collect a good deal of local information or to form deep impressions of greatness of the sanctified place.

Thus I came to conceive the final plan, and the monograph, as it stands now, comprises the following five books:

Book I—Pre-Buddhistic history of Gayā;

Book II—Old Shrines at Bodh-Gayā—General Description;

Book III—Old Shrines at Bodh-Gayā—The Inscriptions;

Book IV—Old Stone-railing at Bodh-Gayā—The Bas-reliefs;

and Book V—Plates.

It will be noticed that the last-born book has become the principal division, and the remaining books are made to hang upon it as its appendices. Though Book I deals with the early history of the Gayā-region forming the holy land, alike of the Hindus and of the Buddhists, it is made to bear the misleading title of "Pre-Buddhistic history" for no other purpose than emphasizing the importance of Gayā as a place of Hindu pilgrimage and funeral rites even prior to the rise of Buddhism.

I have the satisfaction of thinking that no pain has been spared and no stone left unturned to collect information from all sources within my access. And as for the method of treatment in Book I, it will be at once seen that the first half is filled with literary evidences, marshalled with some skill with a view to preparing the reader's mind to appreciate the historical delineation of a picture of the life of the Gayā region in its ups and downs,—the picture viewed and presented in the second half in its different perspectives, past and present, Hindu and Buddhist, Indian and extra-Indian, local and universal. In a word, I have tried to realise the history of the great holy land as a vision. But when a picture is seen in its different perspectives, some of the common features are bound to recur in each view; and this is, no doubt, to excuse me the occurrence, here and there, of some common points. I have good reasons,

however, to believe that in each article or sectional view the sympathetic reader will catch hold of some kind of novelty to relieve his eye-sight. The real excuse, undoubtedly, is that the book is intended not so much to enlighten others as to manifest my own self in the hope that those who are like-natured, like-minded and like-visioned will care to look at the glorious picture of the place as I have viewed it and may, perhaps, derive some benefit from it. And this is truly to say in the glowing words of Śāntideva, author of the Bodhicharyāvatāra :

........न मे परार्थचिन्ता, स्वमनो वासयितुं कृतं ममेदं ॥
मम तावदनेन याति वृद्धिं, कुशलं भावयितुं प्रसादवेगः ।
अथ मत्समधातुरेव पश्येद् अपरोऽप्यनेमतोऽपि सार्थकोऽयं ॥

In writing out the major portion of Book I, I have been much benefitted by many valuable suggestions offered at all stages of its progress by Sir Charu Chandra Ray of Chandernagore and by my friend Mr. Phanindra Nath Chakrabarty, M.A., Hony. Secretary to the Serampore Public Library and a keen lover of Sanskrit learning and antiquarian researches. In the same connection I am no less indebted to my young friend Mr. Venoy Chandra Chakrabarty for material assistance rendered by him from time to time.

I shall ever fall short of words to adequately express my gratitude to my friends and well-wishers, Mr. J. N. Basu, Mr. Ramaprasad Mookerjee, Mr. Kumar Krishna Dutt, Mr. Nagendra Nath Chandra, Mr. Satya Bikas Banerji, Mr. A. K. Ghose, M.A., Bar-at-Law, Mr. Surendra Kumar Bose, Mr. Balai Chand Nundi, Dr. Indu Bhusan

Brahmachari, Mr. Satis Chandra Ghosh, Mr. Narayan Chandra Kundu, Mr. A. K. Mondal, Mrs. Sarajudei Debi, Mr. J. C. Dass and Mr. Surendra Kumar Sen of the Bengal Central Bank, and to my pupils Mr. Prabodh Chandra Sen, Mr. Hirendra Lall Sen Gupta, Mr. Nalini Kanta Das and Messrs. Nirmal Chandra Barua and Dwijendra Lall Barua, all of whom have stood by me in my struggle for existence during the last three years of my life.

I turn at last to my esteemed friend Dr. B. C. Law with whom I became associated for the first time in 1911. The bond of love and fellow-feeling has grown stronger as years have rolled by. I have keenly watched his steady progress in Buddhistic researches, and it is a source of great satisfaction to me that he will live by some of his publications, *Buddhaghosa*, *Some Kṣatriya Tribes in Ancient India*, *Buddhistic Studies*, and *A History of Pāli Literature* (in the press). I am particularly indebted to him for the magnanimity with which he has rendered me financial help in preparing the MS. of an illustrated monograph on the Stūpa of Barhut, of which just one book containing the Inscriptions has so far been published, as well as in printing the present monograph—Gayā and Buddha-Gayā. His is the motive force that has urged me to make a sustained labour in producing these two monographs.

In closing this preface, my heart is heavy with grief that I can see no more with my mortal eyes the face of my father Kabiraj Rajchandra Barua, who inspired me to dedicate my life to the pursuit of truth, of my father-in-law, of my maternal grandmother and eldest maternal uncle, of three grand old men Joylal Barua, Haragobinda Mutsuddi and

Lalmohan Mahathera among my kith and kin, of my teachers Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids, Dr. Satis Chandra Vidyabhusan and Dr. Mabel H. Bode, of father-like Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, Principal Kshirode Chandra Raychaudhuri and Khan Bahadur Maulvi Muhammad Ibrahim, and of three uncles and unfailing friends Dhananjoy Barua, Gagan Chandra Barua and Satis Chandra Barua, all of whom tried in various ways to guide me and help forward the cause espoused by me. May this work serve as a humble tribute to their sacred memory.

Calcutta,
29th September, 1931. } B. M. BARUA

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

I consider myself fortunate in having the opportunity of rectifying inaccuracies in certain statements in the light of subsequent study of materials bearing on the history of Buddha-Gayā. There is, however, no fresh material to add, and accordingly the book retains substantially its original form.

University of Calcutta,
November 15, 1934. } B. M. BARUA

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The public and the scholarly world are by this time well aware of the aims and activities of the Indian Research Institute. In its humble way it is trying to resuscitate the magnificent cultural tradition of India by publication of the Vedic and Post-Vedic Literature in critical editions with translations and copious notes. It has also started its Fine Arts Series publications beginning with an illustrated Monograph on Barhut Monuments and Sculptures in three books, and the Indian Positive Sciences Series publications.

With the revised edition of the Vol. I (Book I) of Dr. B. M. Barua's Monograph—Gayā and Buddha Gayā, the Hindu and Buddhist Holy Land, it now starts the Indian History Series which, as it is contemplated, will include similar works dealing with various aspects of the Religious and Cultural History of India and the countries around. The Vol. II (Books II—V) by the same author, which is but an illustrated Monograph on the old shrines of Bodh Gayā is simultaneously published and is included as No. 4 of its Fine Arts Series.

The institute feels that for a comprehensive Religious and cultural History of India, requiring a good deal of generalisations, sufficient data should be collected by an intensive study of the history of all local centres of importance and the present Monograph is offered as nothing but a model of the work which remains yet to be done by different scholars.

The Institute has to record its grateful thanks to Dr. B. C. Law, M.A., B.L., Ph.D., for his kind patronage but for which such costly publications could not have been undertaken.

Taking both the volumes together, the price has been moderately fixed just to cover the printing costs and the Institute expects that all public libraries and lovers of Indology will sympathise with the present venture of the Institute by purchasing its publications.

Indian Research Institute,
Dated, the 8th Nov., 1934. } Satis Chandra Seal

GAYĀ AND BUDDHA-GAYĀ

BOOK I

PRE-BUDDHISTIC HISTORY OF GAYĀ

1. TASK DEFINED

Our task in this book is suggested in its title. By "Pre-Buddhistic History of Gayā" we are to understand here a systematic historical account of Gayā as it stood prior to and at the time of the rise of Buddhism, and by Gayā we are to understand that portion of the ancient kingdom of Magadha which was covered by Gayā-kshetra as distinguished from Magadha-kshetra. In the following pages we are to present a picture of this ancient holy place chiefly as it is said to have been found by Prince Siddhārtha of Kapilavāstu when he wandered about as a lonely ascetic in Eastern India in the 6th century B. C., giving a sketch of its subsequent history from the time of Aśoka down to the Pāla period and after.

The task thus defined cannot be an easy one. For here we are not so much to draw a picture of Gayā-kshetra long after it had emerged into a world-wide importance on account of its association with some of the momentous events in the life-history of the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, as to give clear glimpses into the dark background from which it emerged into such an importance.

We are to disabuse our mind of all the false and delusive impressions that are likely to be created by the pious legends of later growth and the numerous shrines of worship and

art built in after ages by the Buddhists, the Hindus and the Jains.

Here we are not so much to witness the play from a front seat reserved for the audience as to go behind the scene and examine the mechanism of the stage and have a view of the unpainted figures of the players.

2. GAYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA—A MONSTROUS LEGEND

So far as Brahmanical literature goes, the Gayā-Māhātmya in the Vāyu-Purāṇa is the only elaborate legendary account[1] which the modern historian has to rely upon in writing a sober history of Gayā-kshetra. When exactly the Gayā-māhātmya was composed and when it came to form a section of the Vāyu-Purāṇa are still a matter of conjecture. But certain it is that this pious eulogium of Gayā-kshetra was the literary production of an age when the Vaishṇavas got hold of the Hindu shrines in the old town of Gayā (*purāṇā Gayā*) and its suburbs, and found it expedient to carry on a vigorous propaganda work for attracting annually a large number of pilgrims from the different parts of India. This Vaishṇava eulogium of Gayā-kshetra[2] was characterised by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton as "a monstrous legend" on the basis of which no sober history of the place could be written. Even Dr. Rajendralala Mitra who spared no pains to glean some historical truths from this eulogium could not help characterising it as "a wild story."[3] The reader must, first of all, be introduced to the contents of the

[1] The *Agni-Purāṇa* presents in chapters CXIV-CXVII a somewhat later, abridged and slightly different version of the *Gayā-māhātmya*.

[2] The Agni-Purāṇa version may be appropriately judged as a Yājñika (Śākta)-Vaishṇava eulogium of Gayā.

[3] Mitra's *Buddha Gayā*, p. 10.

Gayā-māhātmya in order that he may judge for himself what these signify and how far these deserve credence.

3. GAYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA—ITS CONTENTS

The Gayā-māhātmya which forms the concluding section of the Vāyu-Purāṇa comprises altogether eight chapters, its first chapter standing as the 105th chapter and its eighth or last chapter being counted as the 112th chapter of the Purāṇa in its entirety. That the Gayā-māhātmya represents a distinct entity among the several sections or books of the Purāṇa is proved by the fact that it has been commenced with a prologue and concluded with an epilogue and its chapters have been so arranged that the succeeding chapters hang on the first as elaborations of the theses presented in the first or opening chapter. The concluding stanzas constituting its epilogue state in clear terms that the Gayā-māhātmya might otherwise be called *Gayākhyāna* or *Gayopākhyāna*, "The bardic narration of the legendary story of Gayā," and *Gayā-mahimāna*, "The traditional eulogium of Gayā." Its prologue[1] and epilogue clearly bring out this fact that it was intended to serve this twofold purpose: (1) to extol the high antiquity, great sanctity and special importance of the holy tract of Gayā (*Gayā-kshetra*), and (2) to emphasize its authenticity and value as a pilgrim's guide-book (*Gayā-yātrā*).

Brahmā is said to have declared that the entire tract of Gayā was 5 *krośas* in extent; that Gayā proper repre-

[1] Vāyu-Purāṇa, 105.3, 112.1-67:
Nārada uvācha:
Sanatkumāra me brūhi tīrthaṃ tīrthottamottamam |
tārakaṃ sarva-bhūtānāṃ paṭhatāṃ śriṇvatāṃ tathā ||

senting the inner zone of the tract of Gayā was 2½ *krośas* in extent; and that Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha determining the extension of the ancient town of Gayā and representing the innermost zone of the tract of Gayā was 1 *krośa* in extent.[1] It is boldly claimed that there is no spot within the holy tract of Gayā where there is not a *tīrtha* or *sanctorum* (bathing place or shrine) worth visiting,[2] which is to say, all the *tīrthas* associated with the name of Gayā were situated within this geographical extension.[3]

It is stated that Gayā was a holy tract in the kingdom of Kīkaṭa or Magadha which in its western extension included the sacred river Pūnpūn and in its eastern extension included the pleasant woodland of Rājagṛiha.[4] We are led to think that the kingdom of Kīkaṭa-Magadha was extended so far towards the west as to include the Son region.[5]

It is certain that, according to description in the Gayā-

[1] Vāyu-Purāṇa, 105.29, 106.65:
Sārddha-krośa-dvayaṃ mānaṃ Gaye'ti Brahmaṇeritam ||
pañchakrośaṃ Gayā-kshetraṃ, krośam ekaṃ Gayāśiraḥ |
tan madhye sarva-tirthāni prayacchantu hitaṃ nṛiṇām ||
Cf. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 115.42.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.47:
Gayāyāṃ na hi tat sthānaṃ yatra tīrthaṃ na vidyate |
sānnidhyaṃ sarva-tīrthānāṃ Gayā-tīrthaṃ tato varam ||
Cf. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 116.27-28.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.30:
Tan madhye sarva-tīrthāni trailokye yāni santi vai |
śrāddhakṛid yo Gayā-kshetre pitṛiṇām anṛiṇo hi saḥ ||

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.73:
Kīkaṭeshu Gayā puṇyā, puṇyaṃ Rājagṛihaṃ vanam |
Chyavanasyāśramaṃ puṇyaṃ, nadī puṇyā Punaḥpunā ||

[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.74. Rajendralala Mitra observes (*Buddha Gayā*, p.8, f.n. (*a*): "Kīṭaka (? Kikaṭa) is now accepted as a synonym for Magadha; but it was evidently the name of the southern portion of it. Its area, given in the Deśāvalī, a mediæval work, would barely cover the district of Gayā."

māhātmya, Gayā-kshetra extended towards the north as far, at least, as the Preta, Preta śilā or Pretakūṭa hill,[1] and extended towards the south as far, at least, as the sacred Bo-tree (*Mahābodhitaru*, *Bodhi-druma*) at Bodh-Gayā.[2]

The *pañchakrośi* Gayā is said to have been extensive enough to contain 55 villages, many fine houses built for the Brahmins and provided with all necessaries of life, the milch-cows, the Wishing and Pārijāta trees, such sacred streams as the Mahānadī, the Ghṛitakulyā and the Madhukulyā, many large tanks and several holy mountains.[3]

"The Phalgu," as described in the District Gazetteer of Gayā (p. 8), "flowing north and south, intersects the district. It is formed by the junction, some 2 miles below Bodh-Gayā, of the Nilājan and the Mohānā—two large hill streams, each of which is over 300 yards wide. The united stream flows on to the north past the town of Gayā, where it attains a breadth of 900 yards. The Phalgu here impinges on a high rocky bank, on the steep sides of which are many *ghāts* leading down to the river-bed, while high above are the Vishnupad temple [Fig. 1] with many minor shrines, and the houses of the Gayāwāls. It then runs in a north-easterly direction for about 17 miles, and opposite the Barābar Hills it again takes the name of Mohānā and divides into two branches, which eventually flow into a branch of the Pūnpūn."

The Gayā-māhātmya is not concerned to describe the

1 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.67-69.

2 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.26-27. Cf. Rajendralala Mitra's *Buddha Gayā*, pp. 18-19: "In fact, everywhere in the *māhātmya* Gayā is assumed to include the whole area from the little hill Pretāśilā, on the north, to the Bodhidruma, on the south, a distance of 13 miles."

3 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.72-75.

full course of the Phalgu river. It has nowhere mentioned that the two large hill streams, the Nilājan (Buddhist *Nerañjarā* or *Nairañjanā*) and the Mohānā flowed together as Phalgu within the distance of twenty miles or so, and that in the north beyond this distance the united stream Phalgu again assumed the name of Mohānā and eventually flowed into a branch of the Pūnpūn river, being divided into two branches. But it expressly says that the Phalgutīrtha proper was co-extensive with the Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha hill and its spurs, the Nāgakūṭa, the Gṛidhrakūṭa, the Janārdanakūṭa and the site of the Brahmayūpa, its extension from the Gayāśira hill to the North Mānasa tank being 1 *krośa*.[1] If the Gayāśira hill and its spurs determined the extension of the then known town of Gayā (Gayāpurī) from south to north, we can say that this town of Gayā, too, was neither more nor less than one *krośa* in extent. We are further told that that part of the Phalgutīrtha which extended from the Krauñchapāda as far south as the Gayāśira hill proper formed the face or front of Gayâsura (Gayâsuramukha).[2] It is, then, certain that, according to the Gayā-māhātmya, the ancient town of Gayā was situated on the western bank of the Phalgu river.

The Mahānadī, the Madhukulyā, the Dadhikulyā, the

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.41-42, 111.21 :
Sākshād Gayāśiras tatra Phalgutīrthāśritaṃ kṛitam |
Nāgāj Janārdanād Brahmayūpāch chottara-Mānasāt ||
etad Gayāśiraḥ proktaṃ Phalgutīrthaṃ tad uchyate ||
Nāgakūṭād Gṛidhrakūṭād Yūpād Uttara-Mānasāt ||
etad Gayāśiraḥ proktaṃ Phalgutīrthaṃ tad uchyate ||

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.44 :
Krauñchapādāt Phalgutīrthaṃ yāvat sākshād Gayāśiraḥ |
mukhaṃ Gayāsurasyaitat tasmāch chhrāddham ihākshayam |

Ghṛitakulyā and the Madhusravā are mentioned as the important rivers in Gayā-kshetra.[1] The Mahānadī lay just to the east of the gate of Gayā.[2] The Phalgu is mentioned as a river of Gayā [Fig. 3] which was even more sacred than the Ganges.[3] From the position assigned to the Mahānadī it appears that it is the same river as the Phalgu. There are two stanzas in which Devikā may be taken as another popular name for the Mahānadī,[4] while it is distinctly stated in the Mahābhārata that this Mahānadī was no other than the large river which was known (at least, in part) by the name of Phalgu.[5]

The Madhusravā is a small rivulet, which flows down into the Phalgu river throughout the year from the east side of the Gayāśira hill proper, the modern Brahmayoni hill. The Ghṛitakulyā, the Dadhikulyā and the Madhukulyā are nothing but three little parallel cataracts that flow down the southern slope of the Bhasmakūṭa hill during the rains and completely dry up during winter and summer. A little higher up towards the peak of the Brahmayoni hill

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.16-17, 106.74-75, 112.30, 105.44.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 110.6 :

Tato Gayā-praveśe cha pūrvato'sti Mahānadī.

It seems that *Mahānadī* is the same with what is now known as the river *Mohânâ.*

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111-16 :

Gaṅgā pādodakaṃ Vishṇoḥ Phalgurhyādi-Gadādharaḥ |
svayaṃ hi dravarūpeṇa tasmād Gaṅgādhikaṃ viduḥ ||

The high sanctity of the river Phalgu is brought forth thus in the *Agni-Purāṇa*, 115.17-33 : "the *tīrtha* is called Phalgu from the fact of prosperity and heaven being the product (*phalam*) thereof."

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.7, 112-30 : *Devikā cha Mahānadī.*

[5] *Mahābhārata*, *Vanaparva*, 85.12 :

Sā cha puṇyajalā tatra Phalgu nāmā Mahānadī |

Cf. *Mahābhārata*, *Vanaparva*, 82.83, 82.97, and 86.11, where the *Mahānadī* appears to have been distinguished from the Phalgu river.

one may mark out three such other cataracts bearing the name of Śubhrā, Agnidhārā and Kapilā, the last named cataract feeding the waters of the Rukmiṇikuṇḍa. The Ākāśagaṅgā symbolising the Milky Way of the sky is a similar cataract to be located on a hill to the east of the Bhasmakūṭa.

We have still to ascertain the distance in miles covered by the five *kos* extension of Gayā-kshetra. According to modern Indian usage, one *kos* is broadly equal to two miles. We may maintain that this equivalence holds true also of *krośa* as employed in the Gayā-māhātmya. If the full extension of Gayā-kshetra ranged over a distance of five *krośas*, and the holy tract of Gayā extended as far south as the Bo-tree at Bodh-Gayā, which is situated six miles to the south of the town of Gayā and as far north as the Pretaśilā hill which is situated five miles on the north-west of the town of Gayā, it is evident that five *kos* extension of Gayā-kshetra covered the distance of not less than ten miles from south to north.

We need no longer be in the dark about the precise meaning of the expression explained by the Brahmin care-takers and beneficiaries of the shrines and bathing *ghāts* of Gayā and pilgrims' guides called Gayāwāls. The expression *pañchakrośa*, "five *kos*," signifies the widest circuit of pilgrimage to be completed by a "Gayā pilgrim with the Vishṇu-pada temple as its centre." The intended meaning has thus been brought out in the District Gazetteer of Gayā (p. 215):

> "In another courtyard (of the Vishnupad temple) close by stands a small granite temple dedicated

to Vishnu as Gadādhar or the mace-bearer, and near its north-western corner there is a small rough pillar, and a rude carving of an elephant, called Gaj, from which the five *kos* forming the circuit of pilgrimage are measured."

From this explanation, it is clear that the utmost circuit of pilgrimage which a Gayā pilgrim is expected to complete denotes the circumference of a circle of which the radius is five *kos* or ten miles. From a certain date the extension of five *kos* became the maximum traditional circuit of pilgrimage to be travelled over by a pilgrim to each Hindu holy place, whether it is Gayā, Kāśī or Prayāga.[1]

The Gayāśira, the Muṇḍaprishṭha, the Prabhāsa, the Udyanta, the Gītanāda, the Bhasmakūṭa, the Nāgakūṭa, the Gridhrakūṭa, the Ādipāla, the Aravindaka, the Rāmaśilā, the Pretaśilā—these are the sacred hills and rocky peaks, ridges and spurs in Gayā-kshetra.[2]

The Phalgu, the Mahānadī, the Dadhikulyā, the Ghritakulyā, the Madhukulyā, the Madhusravā, the Agnidhārā, the Kapilā—these are the holy rivers and streams.[3]

The Phalgutīrtha, the Śilātīrtha, the Rāmatīrtha, the Gadālolatīrtha, the Vaitaraṇī, the Brahmasara, the Brahmakuṇḍa the North Mānasa, the South Mānasa, the Rukmiṇikuṇḍa, the Pretakuṇḍa, the Nikshārā-pushkariṇī, the Mātaṅgavāpī—these are the principal bathing places.[4]

[1] There is a familiar saying in Bengal, *ye nā karle pañchakosi, tār kiser kāsi?* "He who does not complete the circuit of five *kos*, has he done the pilgrimage to Benares?"

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.12-13, 108.61, 108.68, 109.14-15, 109.36, 109.43, 111.22, 41-42.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.44, 106.74-75, 108.16, 108.57-58, 109. 16-17. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 106, adds the river *Ākāśagaṅgā*.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.2, 108.17, 108.27, 108.44, 111.2, 111.22, 111.24-25, 111.30, 111.75-76. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 105.27-33, mentions also the *Haṃsatīrtha* and the *Koṭitīrtha*.

The Pañchaloka, the Saptaloka, the Vaikuṇṭha, the Goprachāra, the Dharmâraṇya—these are the sacred sites.[1]

The Akshayavaṭa, the Gṛidhrakūṭavaṭa, the Brahmaprakalpita Āmra, the Bodhidruma Aśvattha—these are the sacred trees.[2]

The Vishṇupada, the Krauñchapada, the Rudrapada, the Brahmapada, the Kāśyapapada, the Dakshiṇâgnipada, the Gārhapatyapada, the Sabhyapada, the Āvasathyapada, the Śakrapada, the Agastyapada, the Sūryapada, the Kārtikeyapada, the Gaṇeśapada—these are the various sacred footprints.[3]

The Dharmaśilā, the Kākaśilā,—these are the sacred stones.[4]

The Ādigadādhara, the Gāyatrī, the Sāvitrī, the Sandhyā, the Sarasvatī, the Gayâditya, the Uttarârka, the Dakshiṇârka, the Śvetârka, the Naimisha, the Gaṇanātha, the Eight Vasus, the Eleven Rudras, the Seven Ṛishis, the Somanātha, the Siddheśa, the Kapardīśa, the Vināyaka, the Nārāyaṇa, the Mahālakshmī, the Brahmā, the Śrīpurushottama, the Mārkaṇḍeyeśa, the Koṭīsa, the Aṅgireśa, the Pitāmaha, the Prapitāmaha, the Vṛiddha Prapitāmaha, the Janārdana, the Puṇḍarīkâksha, the Phalguchaṇḍī, the Śmaśānâkshī, the Maṅgalā, the Yama Dharmarāja, the Dharmeśvara—these are the visible forms or images of various deities.[5]

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.16, 111.23, 111.35.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.45, 111.26-27, 111.35.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.18-19, 111.44-56.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 107.43, 108.15, 108.23, 109.46.

[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109 20-24, 111.26, 112.58. The *Agni-Purāṇa*, 106.1-16, mentions also the deities known as *Jagannātha*, *Balabhadra* and *Subhadrā* (composing the Hindu

The Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha, as known to the author of the Gayā-māhātmya, is a set of such rocky hills, peaks and ridges as the Gayāśira hill proper (*sākshāt Gayāśira*), the Muṇḍapṛishṭha, the Prabhāsa, the Nāgakūṭa, and the Gṛidhrakūṭa ranging over a distance of 1 *krośa*. This set of rocky formations which is said to have been co-extensive with the Phalgutīrtha determined the extension of Gayāpurī, the old city of Gayā and innermost zone of Gayā-kshetra.

The Gayāśira hill proper [Fig. 4] forming the southern or more accurately the south-western limit of the old city of Gayā is no other than the rugged hill to the south of Gayā town "which rises some 400 feet above" this town and is now known as the Brahmayoni hill on account of the fact that it has "a small natural fissure in the rocks at the top," which "is looked upon as the *yoni* or womb" of Brahmā. This fissure is just wide enough to allow a man anyhow to crawl through it and "it is believed that by crawling through it the pilgrim escapes rebirth from a human womb."[1] The peak of this hill with its southern ridge presents the figure of an elephant set on the ground.

The Muṇḍapṛishṭha is a pillow-like ridge upon which rests, as the fantastic Hindu legend in the Gayā-māhātmya puts it, the back of the head of the giant Gayâsura.[2] It is a small hill, which is situated on the western bank of the Phalgu river. As a matter of fact, the Phalgutīrtha proper

Triad), *Mādhava, Gaurī, Kāleśa, Siddheśvara, Varāha, Nṛisiṃha, Śrī, Rāma, Sītā, Garuḍa* and *Vāmana*, among others.

[1] *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, p. 216 Cf. *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.84, for the traditional belief in the efficacy of crawling through *Brahmayoni*.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.51-55, 108.12.

(*sākshāt Phalgutīrthaka*) representing the main bathing place in the Phalgu river lies just under this hill.[1] There is a tank at the foot of this hill, where a pilgrim may perform ablutions to enable the departed spirits connected with his family to go to heaven.[2] It is on a spot on this hill, known as Krauñchapada, that the famous sage Krauñchamuni and it is on a declivity of this hill that the well-known sage Lomaharshaṇa Lomaśa attained *siddhi* or final beatitude by practising severe austerities.[3] This rocky formation of the earth is otherwise known as Krauñchapada on account of the fact that it bears the sacred footprints of the silent contemplative Krauñchamuni who meditated upon it assuming the posture of a *krauñcha* or crane.[4] That part of the holy river Phalgu which extends with its several bathing *ghāts* from the Krauñchapada or Muṇḍapṛishṭha to the Gayāśira hill proper is said to have formed the face of the giant Gayâsura,[5] apparently in the sense that the Gayāśira set of hills is directly confronted by it. So far as the description in the Gayā-māhātmya goes, the Muṇḍapṛishṭha is no other than the modern Vishṇupada hill which represents "the centre of the Gayā pilgrimage.[6]

The Muṇḍapṛishṭha is overshadowed by another hill which is called Prabhāsa, "the Luminous," because it is illuminated by the sun.[7] The suggested etymological explanation of the name may easily lead one to think that a certain image of the Sun-god is installed upon its top. But

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.45:
Muṇḍapṛishṭhaṃ nagādhastāt sākshāt tat Phalgutīrthakam. |

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.76.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108,75.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.45, 111.45.

[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.77.

[6] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.44.

[7] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.13.

the Gayā-māhātmya does not leave us in the dark as to what special object of worship is to be found there. It expressly says that a Śivaliṅga stands there as a pinnacle of the hill, and that this *liṅga* is but a visible symbol of the deity honoured by the name of Prabhāseśa, "the Lord of the Prabhāsa hill."[1]

The Gṛidhrakūṭa hill is called Gṛidhrakūṭa or Vultures' Peak on account of the fact that the great sages attained the final beatitude by meditating upon it, assuming the posture of a vulture. Its special sanctity lies in the fact that a *liṅga* of the Śiva deity honoured by the name of Gṛidhreśvara, "the Lord of the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill," is installed upon it. This hill bears also the footprints of Śiva. There is in this hill a cave where a pilgrim offers oblations to the manes, and there is also a banyan tree,[2] which a pilgrim worships for the attainment of his highest desires. There is, moreover, a sanctified boundary called Śūlakshetra for offering *piṇḍa* to enable the spirits of deceased forefathers to go to heaven.[3] It will be a mistake to suppose that the Gṛidhrakūṭa of the Gayā-māhāymya is one of the five hills which surrounded Girivraja or Old Rājagṛiha, the most ancient known capital of Magadha. This Gṛidhrakūṭa is evidently a hill in the neighbourhood of the old city of Gayā.

Across the Muṇḍapṛishṭha stands another hill called the Ādipāla. The latter hill has a statue of the elephant-faced god Gaṇeśa enshrined upon it.[4]

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.14.

[2] The tree has died out and no trace of it is to be found now.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.61-64.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.65.

The Rāmaśilā, as described in the District Gazetteer of Gayā (p. 216), is a granite hill, which is situated to the north of the modern town of Gayā with an altitude of 372 feet [Fig. 7]. It bears upon it a sanctified small fragment of stone, called Kākaśilā or "Crows' stone," upon which the offerings are made to the crows.

The Pretakūṭa or Pretaśilā, as described fantastically in the Gayā-māhātmya, is a peak [Fig. 5], which Yama, the Lord of Justice, finding it to be heavy with the burden of sin, kicked off, to a distance isolating it from the Gayāśira set of hills. This apparently haughty action of Yama served, however, a useful purpose in that the Pretakūṭa hill became a sanctum as a happy result of being touched with his feet.[1] Divested of its mythological trappings, the Preta-śilā is "a hill 540 feet in height, situated 5 miles north-west of Gayā." "The meaning of the name is the hill of ghosts, and it is sacred to Yama, the Hindu god of hell, and forms one of the sacred places of pilgrimage."[2] There is to be seen on the top of this hill a granite boulder appearing like a sitting elephant [Fig. 6].

The remaining names, Bhasmakūṭa and the rest, denote certain hills, peaks and ridges in the neighbourhood of the Muṇḍapṛishṭha hill and the Gayāśira hill proper bearing diverse sanctuaries and enjoying the importance of being each a special place of pilgrimage and worship.

It will appear from the supplied list of names that the bathing places in Gayā-kshetra, precisely like those in many other places of Hindu pilgrimage, comprise rivers, lakes, tanks, and hot springs. The chief bathing places of Gayā

[1] *District Gazatteer of Gayā*, p. 235. [2] *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, p. 234.

are, however, the bathing *ghāts* that lead down to that part of the Phalgu river which extends along the Gayāśira set of hills.

According to the legend in the Gayā-māhātmya, the Gadālolatīrtha represents that sacred lake or pool of water (on the east side of the Brahmayoni hill and close to the Rukminikuṇḍa) where Vishṇu in his mace-bearing form (*Ādigadādhara*) washed his mace after breaking the head of the giant Heti with it,[1] and the Rāmatīrtha represents that part of the Mahānadī or the river Mohānā where Rāma bathed together with Sītā, his wife.[2]

The Vaitaraṇī standing as a visible symbol of the celestial river of the same name is a holy tank at a small distance from the foot of the Bhasmakūṭa hill.

Brahmasara is a tank, which forms one of the main bathing places of a site sacred to Brahmā and is to be located to the east of the Gadālolatīrtha.

The North Mānasa is a sacred tank, which lies to the north of Gayāpurī, the old city of Gayā.[3] The South Mānasa is another holy tank which is placed south of Kaṇakhala, and this Kaṇakhala or Kankhal must be a place in Gayā-kshetra distinct from a place of the same name, which is located in Haridvāra or Hardwar.[4]

The Rukmiṇikuṇḍa is a tank, which is located to the east of the cataract Kapilā,[5] and as a matter of fact, is fed by the latter.

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.9-12, 111.75-76. [2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.6-7.

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.43. It was excavated in the 11th century A.D., see *passim*.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.7-8. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 115, distinctly says that the sanctuary of Kankhal lies to the north of the Muṇḍapṛishṭha hill.

[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.57.

The Pretakuṇḍa, now known by the name of Brahmakuṇḍa, is an important bathing place at the foot of the Pretakūṭa or Pretaśilā hill.[1]

The Nikshārā-pushkariṇī is the far-famed sacred tank at the foot of the Krauñchapada, Muṇḍapṛishṭha or Vishṇupada hill.[2]

The Mātaṅgavāpī is another sacred tank located in Dharmâraṇya[3]—a site, which may be identified, at least in part, with what the Buddhists call the jungle of Uruvelā or Uruvilvā (Bodh-Gayā).

Among the sacred sites in Gayā-kshetra, the Goprachāra is a sanctified boundary for the pilgrims to give away the cows as gifts setting them free after due consecration, and it forms a small tableland on a southern slope of the Bhasmakūṭa hill. It consists of a sulphur-coloured massive block of conglomerate stone differing from the granite boulders in which the hills of Gayā abound and deeply set in the ground [Fig. 11]. The significance of its name is derived from the fact that it shows certain curious marks resembling the foot-marks of cows.

The Dharmâraṇya, as its name implies, is a jungle tract in Gayā-kshetra, and it represents a sanctified boundary inside which is enshrined the image of Dharmeśvara or Buddha and reigns the Bo-tree Aśvattha of world-wide fame.[4] The enshrinement of the image of Buddha-Dharmeśvara and the presence of the famous Bo-tree suffice to

1 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.67. 2 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.84.

3 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.23-24. The Mātaṅga-vāpī or Elephant-tank is to be located in Bakraur, a village "situated half a mile to the east of Bodh-Gayā on the narrow neck of land between the Nilājan and Mohānā rivers." Its remains are "marked by ancient embankments."

4 *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.23-29.

indicate that the Dharmâranya of the Gayā-māhātmya is, at least, in part, no other sacred site than the precincts of the Bodh-Gayā temple representing the jungle of Uruvelā or Uruvilvā of Buddhist literature.

As regards the sacred trees in Gayā-kshetra, the one of paramount importance to Hindu pilgrims in point of antiquity as well as sanctity is the Akshayavaṭa or Undying Banyan [Fig. 8] which is situated "about half a mile to the south-west of the Vishnupad (Muṇḍapṛishṭha), and immediately under the Brahmajoni Hill (Gayāśira hill proper)." It is at this tree that "the pilgrims make their offerings to the Gayāwāls and conclude their pilgrimage." "Close to it is the temple of Prapitāmaheswar, built entirely of granite blocks, the remains of former buildings, and the westward is a large tank called Rukminikund."[1]

The Gṛidhrakūṭa-vaṭa is another holy Banyan tree which stood close to and marking out the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill.[2]

The Brahmaprakalpita Āmra is the wonderful Mango tree which is located in the vicinity of the sacred site, called Goprachāra (*Goprachāra-samīpastha Āmra*). It had grown on the bank of the tank Brahmasara.[3]

And the Bodhidruma Aśvattha[4] is undoubtedly the far-famed Peepul tree at Bodh-Gayā at the foot of which the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, attained Buddhahood.

Among the *padas* or sacred footprints in Gayā-kshetra, those of Kāśyapa, Vishṇu, Rudra and Brahmā are believed

[1] *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, pp. 215-16 ; *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.79-82.
[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 108.63. The tree has died out leaving no trace of its existence.
[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.36. The tree has died out leaving no trace of it.
[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.27.

to be of supreme importance to the pilgrims.[1] The Vishṇupada [Fig. 2] represents the footprint of the *Ādigadādhara* or mace-bearing form of Vishṇu which is enshrined on the Muṇḍa-pṛishṭha or Vishṇupada hill.[2] The remaining footprints, too, are enshrined on certain rocky sites and have lent their names to them.

The Dharmaśilā or Stone of Virtue is the massive block of stone which, according to a pious legend in the Gayā-māhātmya, was formed in the abode of Yama, the supreme ruler of the nether world, and placed, when necessity arose, on the forehead of the giant Gayâsura to press his monstrous head under it and render his vigorous body motionless.[3] This Stone of Virtue was but a rocky transformation of the pure body of Dharmavratā, the virtuous lady who was the worthy daughter of Dharma and Viśvarūpā and the loving wife of the fearful sage Marīchi. The rocky transformation of her pure self came to happen as an inevitable effect of a fateful curse, although it was uttered by her husband for really no fault of hers.[4] The gods were, however, pleased to grant her this boon, in answer to her last prayer, that her rocky transformation would be venerated as the holiest stone on the earth and serve as seats for the practice of penances by the powerful sages for final beatitude and no less as altars for the offering of oblations for the release of disembodied spirits as well as for general worship for the

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 111.56.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 111.45-46. The Vishṇupada at Gayā can be easily distinguished from the impression of Buddha's feet by the fact that it is an imprint of just one foot on a circular block of stone [Fig. 12].

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 106.45-46.

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 107.2-3, 107.17, 107.21-27. According to the *Agni-Purāṇa,* 114, *Ḍharmavatī* was the name of Dharmavratā's mother.

attainment of heavenly worlds.[1] It is upon this block of stone that Brahmā performed the sacrifice of great historic importance.[2] This is the sacred stone which was destined to bear the impress of the foot of the mace-bearing form of Vishṇu as well as the impresses of other deities and sages.[3] The figures or statuaries of various deities and luminaries remained hidden (*avyakta*) in it.[4] It supplied the rocky material for carving the manifest forms (*vyakta liṅgāṇi*) of various deities and luminaries in Gayā-kshetra.[5]

The Gayā-māhātmya as a Vaishṇava manual represents Vishṇu, particularly in his mace-bearing (Gadādhara) form, as the presiding deity of Gayā-kshetra and extols his iconic representation as the highest object of veneration.[6] The Janārdana or humane, the Nārāyaṇa or super-human and the Puṇḍarīkâksha or lotus-eyed forms, too, are worshipped in Gayā.[7] That is to say, Vishṇu figures in the holy land of Gayā in four different aspects: (1) the Gadādhara or terrible, (2) the Janārdana or mild, (3) the Nārāyaṇa or awe-inspiring, and (4) the Puṇḍarīkâksha or beautiful, the first aspect getting predominance over the rest. Brahmā, the supreme deity of the Brahmanical hermits and Vedic sacrificers, Śiva, the supreme deity of the Brahmanical ascetics, are introduced as aids of Vishṇu, the supreme deity of the Vishṇu worshippers, in times of emergency.[8] The Gayā-māhātmya distinguishes the triple forms or symbols of the presence of Vishṇu, which is to say, the three stages in the process of visualisation: (1) the *avyakta* or unmani-

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 107.42-58.
[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 107.58.
[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 107.44-45, 109.18-25.
[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106·55, 109.24.
[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.72.
[6] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 107.44-45.
[7] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.14-31.
[8] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.47-51.

fest, (2) the *vyaktāvyakta* or semi-manifest, and (3) the *vyakta* or manifest. The slabs of stone on the rocky hills and peaks of Gayā are said to represent the unmanifest form or potential stage; the footprints, the semi-manifest form or suggestive stage; and the stone-figures or statuaries of various deities and luminaries, the manifest form or full iconic stage.[1] The *gadā* or mace by which the Gadādhara Hari or Vishṇu broke the head of the giant Heti during the dispensation of Manu Svāyambhuva[2] and rendered the body of Gayâsura motionless during the age called Śvetakalpa[3] was made of an adamantine bone of the giant Gadâsura.[4] It is because this *gadā* or mace was handled first by Hari or Vishṇu that this god came to be honoured by the epithet Ādigadādhara.[5] Such is the legendary origin or the fantastic etymological explanation ot *Âdigadādhara* as an epithet of Vishṇu worshipped in Gayā.

The Gayā-māhātmya list of images leaves no room for doubt that Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva are the principal deities worshipped in Brahma Gayā or Gayā proper. Among these three principal deities, Brahmā figures in two different forms: (1) as Brahmā and (2) as Pitāmaha or Prapitāmaha[6]. Vishṇu figures, as noticed above, in at least four distinct forms, and in five, if the Uttama, or Śrīpurushottama be added; and Śiva figures as Gaṇanātha, Somanātha, Siddheśa, Kapardīśa and the like. Among the minor deities, male as

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.43-44, 109.24.
[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.5.
[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.3-4.
[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 109.35.
[5] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*. 109.12-14.
[6] Strictly speaking, the name of the object of worship is *Prapitāmaheśvara*, and it signifies a *Śivaliṅga* with a human face, the human form representing Brahmā. This curious form of *Śivaliṅga* resulted evidently from a compromise between Brahmanism and Śaivism.

well as female, the majority are purely Vedic. The Gāyatrī, the Sāvitrī, the Sandhyā, the Sarasvatī, the Sun-god, the Eight Vasus and the Eleven Rudras are all Vedic divinities. The Seven Rishis, too, are Vedic deities and personalities. It will be noticed that the Gayā-māhātmya list mentions some five varieties of the figure of the Sun-god, namely, (1) the Gayâditya, (2) the Uttarârka, (3) the Dakshinârka, (4) the Śvetârka and (5) the Naimisha. The first three are, however, recognised as the principal forms,[1] the Uttarārka being taken to represent the sun in his nothern half-yearly course (*uttarâyaṇe*), the Dakshinârka, the sun in his southern half-yearly course, and the Gayâditya, the sun at one of the equinoxes.

The Vināyaka is nothing but a form of the elephant-faced god Gaṇeśa. The Phalgu-chaṇḍī, the Smaśānâkshī and the Maṅgalā are the three distinct forms in which Śakti is worshipped in Gayā-kshetra. And Dharmeśvara or Lord of Righteousness is a form of the Buddha worshipped in Dharmâraṇya or precincts of the Bodh-Gayā temple, presumably the image of the Buddha confronting the Bo-tree Aśvattha.

All these may suffice to prove that at the time of composition of the Gayā-māhātmya the Śaiva, the Saura, the Gāṇapatya and the Śākta forms of Paurānic Hinduism prevailed in Brahma-Gayā together with the Vedic form of worship, old Brāhmanism and the late phase of Vaishnavism, while the worship of the Buddha was concentrated in Bodh-Gayā.

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.57 :
Gayādityaś chottarārko Dakshiṇārkas tridhā raviḥ |

In spite of the fact that the Holy land of Gayā, as defined in the Gayā-māhātmya, includes in it Dharmâraṇya or Bodh-Gayā, there lurks in the story of Brahmā and the Gayāwāl Brahmins an earlier sectarian distinction between the portion of it which was generally regarded as sacred to Brahmā and the portion which was regarded as sacred to Dharma or Dharmeśvara, that is to say, to the Buddha who was an embodiment of the principle of righteousness.[1]

The story relates that Brahmā concluded the sacrifice which proved effective in rendering the body of the giant Gayâsura motionless by making many liberal gifts[2] to the Brahmins who officiated as priests, enjoining that they must under no circumstances either demand or actually

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.23 :

Dharmāraṇyaṃ tatra Dharmo yasmād yajñam akārayat |

It is quite against the context of this verse that Mr. O'Malley (*Gayā Śrāddha and Gayāwāls* in JASB, 1903, p. 5) takes *Dharma* to mean Yama or Dharmarāja, the god of hell. It is, moreover, nowhere stated in the Gayā-māhātmya that "the *pipal* tree at Dharmāraṇya (Bodh-Gayā), the king of trees to which there is a special invocation, was planted by Dharmarāj." The Gayā-māhātmya verse regarding the Bo-tree at Dharmāraṇya (*Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 110.27) simply reads :

Dharmaṃ Dharmeśvaraṃ natvā mahābodhi-taruṃ namet |
"*Namaste 'śvattha-rājāya Brahmā-Vishṇu-Śivātmane*" ||

Maṇirāma in his *Gayāyātrā-prayoga* (Bloch's *Notes on Bodh Gayā* in *ASR*, 1908-9, p. 152), takes *Dharma*, *Dharmeśvara* and *Mahabodhi-druma* of the verse to signify three distinct objects of worship (*Tato Dharmaṃ, Dharmeśvaraṃ, Mahābodhi-drumaṃ cha yathākramaṃ namet*), without any f rther ado about the identification of any of them. The *Lalitavistara* (Mitra's Ed., p. 344) applies (if our construction is correct) the epithet of *Dharmeśvara* to the Buddha.

It will be noticed that in this verse Dharma has been represented as Dharmeśvara, whose life became associated with the holy pipal tree at Dharmāraṇya, and that the Bo-tree itself has been praised as one suggestive of the very self of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva.

[2] Of fifty five villages, the five-*kos* Gayā, many fine houses built for them and provided with all requisites, the milch-cows, the Wishing, the Pārijâta and such other celestial trees, the Mahānadī and such other holy streams, the tanks of gold, the hills abounding in precious stones and the corn, vegetables, fruits and such other edibles that he created for them.

receive fees and gifts from any other hand.[1] But they being led by greed, demanded and actually received fees and gifts from the hand of Dharma after conducting his worship at Dharmâranya.[2] Seeing that they acted contrary to the term of his gifts, Brahmā came down from high and cursed them, saying, "Whereas, in spite of all liberal gifts made by me, you have been influenced by greed, henceforward you, O twice-born ones, will find yourselves in increasing debts, and henceforth the milk-carrying rivers given to you will become watery, the hills abounding in precious stones will be transformed into rocky elevations, the clarified butter of the Ghṛitakulyā and the honey of the Madhukulyā will be transformed into water, the fine houses built for you will change into mud-walled huts, and the milch cows and the wishing and other celestial trees will vanish from here and go back to my world."[3] The Brahmins in their helplessness entreated Brahmā, saying, "Now that thy curse hath taken away what thy bounty gave us, we pray, O benign deity, be pleased to make suitable provisions for our bare livelihood." And Brahmā being moved to pity at this, declared: "So long as the sun and the moon exist, so long you will continue to live by the income from bounties

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.76 :
Na yāchayadhvaṃ viprendra anyān uktvā dadāvajaḥ |

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.77-78 :
Dharmāraṇye tatra Dharmaṃ yājayitvā yayāchire |
Dharmayāge cha lobhād vai pratigrihya dhanādikam ||

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.78-81 : The opening words of the curse of Brahmā were, according to the *Agni-Purāṇa*, 114. 33-41, these : "You shall be cursed with ignorance, and you and your progenies shall roam like wild colts on the down tormented with the cravings of flesh." The *Agni-Purāṇa*, 114.33-41, alludes to temptation without hinting at its specific nature : "the Brāhmaṇas who were then dwelling in the city of Gayā....caught the gilded bait by accepting the gifts."

of the pious pilgrims who will visit this holy place for performing the funeral rites and the acts of merit, and if they honour you, I shall always feel that I myself have been honoured by them."[1]

So far regarding the earlier sectarian distinction between Brahma Gayā and Dharma or Buddha Gayā lurking in the Gayā-māhātmya story of Brahmā and the Gayāwāl Brahmins. Now as to the origin and significance of certain names, the *Dharmaśilā*, the *Gadālola-tīrtha*, and the like, we have seen what an important rôle was played by philological ingenuity in the invention of fantastic legends serving as a ready-made explanation calculated to satisfy the credulity of old-world inquiry. The Dharmaśilā is a rocky transformation of the body of Dharmavratā, a virtuous lady who was the wife of Marīchi and the daughter of Dharma (Virtue) and Viśvarūpā (Omniform). The Gadālola-tīrtha is the bathing place where Vishṇu rolled or washed his *gadā* (mace) after breaking the head of the giant Heti with it. The *Gadā* itself was only a rocky bone of the giant Gadâsura.[2] But it remains yet to be seen how similar ingenuity played its part also in the invention of two other

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.83-84 :
Tach chhrutvā brāhmaṇān Brahmā provāchedaṃ dayānvitaḥ |
"Tīrthopajīvikā yūyaṁ āchandrārkaṃ bhavishyatha ||
Lokāḥ puṇyā Gayāyāṃ ye śrāddhino Brahmalokagāḥ |
Yushmān ye pūjayishyanti tair ahaṃ pūjitaḥ sadā ||
Cf. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 114.33-41.

[1] Cf. *Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī*, I., where Buddhaghosha cites the following interesting instances of similar reasoning : *Kāko seto aṭṭhīnaṃ setattā, balākā rattā lohitassa rattattā'ti evam ādikā lokāyata-vitaṇḍa-sallāpa-kathā.*" "The crow is white because its bones are white. The crane is red because its blood is red. These and similar other random talks regarding the origin of the world and of things. For the origin of *Gadā*, see also the *Agni-Purāṇa*, 114.17-32.

legends, one accounting for the origin and significance of the name *Gayāpurī* and the other that of *Gayāśira* and *Gayā-kshetra.*

The *Gayāpurī* is, according to the Gayā-māhātmya, the holy city which derived its name from that of Gaya. Gaya was the pious king who performed a great sacrifice at the close of which he made these two prayers to Vishṇu and other gods: (1) that they may be pleased to see that the Gayāwāl Brahmins who are cursed by Brahmā regain their dignity and are honoured at the time of sacrifice, and (2) that they may be pleased to see that Gayāpurī is renowned like Brahmapurī, the heaven of Brahmā, being named after him.[1]

The *Gayāśira* or *Gayāśīrsha* is represented in the Gayā-māhātmya as the range of hills which extends from the Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha hill proper to as far north as the site of Brahmayūpa and on which rests the head of the giant Gayâsura, the Gayāśira hill proper forming its highest elevation and the Muṇḍapṛishṭha a pillow-shaped ridge on which rests just the back of the giant's head. The *Dharmaśilā* is the massive stone placed as a dead-weight on the forehead of the giant to render his body motionless, his navel, that is to say, the middle part of his body, being rendered motionless by the weight of the sacred hill Virajā (a hill at Yājpur in Orissa) and his feet, that is to say, the

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 112. 4-5:
Gayas tān prārthayāmāsa abhisaptās cha ye purā ||
Brāhmaṇā te dvijāḥ pūtā bhavantu kratu-pūjitāḥ |
"Gayāpurī" ti man nāmnā khyātā Brahmapurī yathā ||
The *Agni-Purāṇa* has nothing to say about King Gaya or the naming of the city after him. Without making any nice distinction between *Gayāpurī* and *Gayākshetra*, it simply says (114.41) that the place was named *Gayā* after the demon Gaya.

lower extremities of his body, by the heavy weight of the hill known as Mahendragiri (a hill in Rājmahendri).[1]

The *Gayā-kshetra* is the holy land of Gayā which commemorates the name of Gayâsura. The following is the legend of Gayâsura which is met with in the Gayā-māhātmya.

Brahmā, the great father of the universe, created all living beings in compliance with the request of Vishṇu. From his fierce nature he brought forth the giants, while from his cheerful disposition he produced the gods of joyous mood. Gayâsura was born in the race of the giants. Among the giants, he was endowed with mighty strength and great vigour. He was one hundred and twenty-five leagues (*yojanas*) in height and sixty leagues in girth. He became distinguished as a devout Vaishṇava. He remained stationed on the noble hill of Kolāhala for many thousand years stopping the breathing process and practising the most rigorous austerities. The gods trembled in fear lest they might lose their happy estate in consequence of the giant's ceaseless exertion. How to avert this danger betimes? They sought the help of Brahmā, the supreme deity of the Brāhmanist. Brahmā finding himself incapable of the task, led them into the presence of Śiva, the supreme deity of the Śaiva. Śiva lacking confidence in himself, led them into the presence of Vishṇu, the supreme deity of the Vaishṇava. Vishṇu thinking that the right way would be to

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.85-86:
Ākrāntaṃ daitya-jaṭharaṃ dharmeṇa Virajādriṇā |
Nābhi-kūpa-samīpe tu devī yā Virajā sthitā ||
Tatra piṇḍādikaṃ kṛitvā trihsaptakulam uddharet |
Mahendragiriṇā tasya kṛitau pādau suniśchalau ||
Tatra piṇḍādikaṃ sapta-kulān uddharate narāḥ ||

dissuade the giant from the fateful course by granting what he wished, appeared in no time together with Śiva, Brahmā and all the minor gods before the giant and said: "Well satisfied with your devotion, we are come to grant you any favour that you may desire. Say, Gayâsura, what do you wish ?"

The giant said: "If you are really satisfied with me, render my body purer than all that is and may be conceived as pure." "Even so be it!" was the ready response of the gods headed by Vishṇu.

The result of this blessing was that the mortals who beheld or touched the giant went up to the immortal world of Brahmā, the heaven of the Thrity-three gods became empty, and consequently the domains of Yama and Indra were deprived of their inhabitants. Thus deprived of their subjects, both Yama and Indra along with other gods waited upon Brahmā and requested him to take back the offices that he had bestowed on them. In the last resort, the gods with Brahmā at their head sought again the help of Vishṇu. The resourceful deity said to them: "Do you go and ask the giant to give you his body to perform a sacrifice thereon." They at once carried out Vishṇu's suggestions. Brahmā asked the giant to offer his holy body for the performance of a sacrifice. The giant agreeing to offer his body, fell prostrate on the Kolāhala hill, leaning towards the south-west, with his head resting on the north side and his feet extended towards the south. But lo! the body of the giant was still moving on the sacrificial ground. What else could be done ? Brahmā ordered Yama to fetch from his abode in the nether world the *Dharmaśilā*

or Stone of Virtue and to place it on the giant's head to render it motionless. The Stone of Virtue was forthwith placed on the giant's head, and Brahmā, Rudra and the rest of the gods present sat upon it. But even after being pressed down with the feet of all these gods and the dead-weight of the Stone itself, the giant's body still moved. Vishṇu who was again approached by the gods drew forth from his person a terrible form, the form of the wielder of the mace (*gadādhara*), and sat upon the Stone to prevent its moving. It is by striking the Stone with his mace that Vishṇu at last succeeded in rendering the giant's body completely motionless.

Gayâsura addressed the gods, saying "Why should you, after I have given my sinless body to Brahmā, treat me thus ? Would I not have become motionless at the request of Hari ? Why, then, should you thus torture me with his mace, and the gods should join him ? And now since you all have so cruelly treated me, do you show your mercy to me."

He prayed : "As long as the earth and the mountains, as long as the moon and the stars, shall last, so long may you, Brahmā, Vishṇu, and Maheśvara, rest on this stone. May you, the Devas, rest on it too, and call this place after me the sacred Kshetra of Gayā,[1] extending over five *krośas*, of which one *krośa* would be covered by my head. Therein should abide, for the good of mankind, all the sacred pools on earth, where persons, by bathing and offering of oblations

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.63 :

Yāvat prithvī parvatāś cha yāvach chandrārka-tārakāḥ |
Tāvach chhilāyāṃ tishṭhantu Brahmā-Vishṇu-Maheśvarāḥ ||
Anye cha sakalā devā inan nāmnā kshetram astu vai ||

of water, and funeral cakes may attain high merit for themselves, and translate their ancestors, blessed with all that is desirable and salvation, to the region of Brahmā. As long as Vishṇu in his triple form shall be adored by the learned, so long should this be renowned on earth as the sacred place of Gayâsura, and resort to it should rinse men of even the sin of killing Brahmins."

The legend says that all that the giant wished came to be fulfilled by the boon granted by the gods, headed by Vishṇu.[1]

The sages always recommend the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) when the sun passes through *Pisces*, the month of *Vaiśākha* (April-May) when the sun passes through *Aries*, the month *Jyaishṭha* (May-June) when the sun passes through *Taurus*, the month of *Āśvina* (September-October) when the sun passes through *Virgo*, and the month of *Pausha* (December-January) when the sun passes through *Sagittarius* as the opportune time for Gayā pilgrimage.[2] The most opportune time, however, is the month of *Māgha* (January-February) when the sun passes through *Capricornus*, especially it the eclipse of the sun or of the moon takes place in it.[3]

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.1-72. The Summary given above is substantially based upon Rajendralala Mitra's translation in his *Buddha Gayā*, pp. 10-14. Cf. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 114.1-32.

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.47 :

Mīne Meshe sthite sūrye Kanyāyāṃ Kārmūke Ghaṭe |
Gayāyāṃ durlabhaṃ loke vadanti ṛishayaḥ sadā ||

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105.48 :

Makare Varttamāne cha grahaṇe chandra-sūryayoḥ |
Durlabhaṃ trishu lokeshu Gayā-śrāddhaṃ sudurlabham ||

The *Agni-Purāṇa* quoting the opinion of Kātyāyana prescribes (117.57-63) the 9th day of the bright fortnight in Āśvin, the 12th day of the fortnight in *Kārtik*, the 3rd

Though, for some reasons or other, these months are specified as instances of opportune time, the sanctity of Gayā is so great that pilgrimage thereto may be undertaken and obsequies performed there at all times, there being no reasons for fear even if the time chosen happens to be an inauspicious month, or a birth-day, or the hour of the setting of Venus or of Jupiter, or the period when Jupiter is found in conjunction with *Leo*, or the occasion of the solar or the lunar eclipse.[1]

A man should desire to have many sons (descendants) in the hope that at least one of them will undertake pilgrimage to Gayā or perform a horse-sacrifice or give away a bull of yellow colour for the liberation of his disembodied soul or

day in *Māgh* and *Bhādra,* the new-moon day in *Phālgun,* the 11th day of the fortnight in *Paush,* the 10th day in *Āshāḍh,* the 7th day of the fortnight in *Māgh,* the 8th day of the dark fortnight in *Śrāvan,* and the full-moon day in *Āshāḍh, Kārtik, Phālgun* and *Jyaishṭha.*"

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 105.18-19 :
Gayāyāṃ sarva-kāleshu piṇḍaṃ dadyād vichakshaṇāḥ |
Adhimāse janma-dine chāste' pi Guru-Śukrayoḥ ||
Na tyaktavyaṃ Gayā-śrāddhaṃ Siṃhasthe' pi Bṛihaspatau |
Chandra-sūrya-grahe chaiva mṛitānāṃ piṇḍa-karmasu ||

On this head we have the following information supplied in the *District Gazetteer of Gayā* (p. 64) : "In the Gayā-māhātmya it is laid down that the Gayā *śrāddha* is equally efficacious at all times of the year, but there are three seasons when pilgrims flock to the sacred city, *viz* , (1) the month of *Āsin* (September-October), (2) of *Paus* (December-January), (3) of *Chait* (March-April) ; these three seasons are significantly styled *fasils* or harvests. Pilgrims from Bengal and the East come chiefly in *Chait,* and pilgrims from the north-wes t and west of India in the month of *Āsin* , , , , But considerations of convenience probably regulate the seasons more than anything else. The importance of getting in the rich rice harvest, for instance, probably deters the Bengal pilgrims from coming in the *Āsin* season ; and the pilgrims from Northern and North-western India do not like being away from home while the *rabi* is being harvested. The pilgrims are also influenced by the occurrence of a *kāla suddha* (auspicious time) or *kāla asuddha* (inauspicious time), and the occurrence of an eclipse is the occasion for a great influx of devotees."

for the propitiation of his departed spirit.[1] A householder truly becomes the father of a family of men by having a son (descendant) who offers *piṇḍa* at Gayā. The sanctity of the place is such that by staying three fortnights there and living the pious life of a pilgrim a descendant is able to sanctify the tradition of seven generations of forefathers on his father's side and on the mother's side.[2] A believer wishing to reap the fruit of his acts of merit at Gayā, must put away lust, anger and greed, remain chaste in life, eat one meal a day, sleep on bare ground, speak the truth, maintain the purity of self and be intent on doing good to all living beings.[3]

No formal invocation is necessary because the departed spirits either dwell there waiting for the arrival of their descendants or accompany them when they proceed to Gayā. The quarters are not to be guarded by spells, nor is there any fear of an evil eye. The wise undertake pilgrimage to Gayā and perform funeral rites in the humbleness of spirit.[4]

Now the summary of the contents of the Gayā-māhātmya may be concluded with a quotation from the Gayā District Gazetteer (pp· 62-63) bearing upon the actual ceremonies to be observed at Gayā by a Hindu pilgrim :

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 105.10 :
Eshṭavyā bahavāḥ putrā yadyeko 'pi Gayāṃ vrajet |
Yajeta chāśvamedhena nīlaṃ vā vṛisham utsṛijet ||

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 105.11 :

[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 105.40-41 :
Kāmaṃ krodhaṃ tathā lobhaṃ tyaktvā kāryā kriyāniśam ||
Brahmachāryekabhojī cha bhūśāyī satyavāk śuchiḥ |
Sarvabhūtahite rataḥ sa tīrthaphalam aśnute ||

[4] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 105.38, 110.28 :
Nāvāhanaṃ na digbandho na dosho dṛishṭi-sambhavaḥ |
Sakāruṇyena kartavyaṃ tīrtha-śrāddhaṃ vichakshaṇaiḥ ||

"The first ceremony to be observed by the pilgrim is to shave at the river Pūnpūn, and on arrival at Gayā itself he is conducted before the Gayāwāl who is his family priest, and worships his feet.[1] The Gayā *śrāddha* then begins, and the pilgrim visits, if he is piously inclined, and has time and money to spare, all the 45 *vedis*, which lie within the holy ground extending for some 15 miles between the Preta-śilā Hill on the north and Bodh Gayā on the south, and which centre in Gayā itself. It is absolutely essential, however, to offer *pindas* or balls of rice to the spirits of the dead[2] in three places (repeating the prescribed texts and prayers under the direction of the Gayāwāl), *viz.*, at the Phalgu river, the Vishnupad temple, and the Akshayabaṭ or

1 The Dhāmis represent a special class of priests who "alone have the right to officiate at the ceremonies performed at five *Vedis*, Pretaśilā, Rāmaśilā, Rāmakuṇḍa, Brahmakuṇḍa and Kāgbali, out of the total of forty-five *vedis*, the Gayāwāls having a monopoly of the remainder." "The five *vedis*, the *panchavedi* which comprises the second day of the pilgrim's tour, are all situated on or about the two hills. Rāma-śilā and Pretaśilā, which are peculiarly devoted to Yama and evil spirits." O'Malley's *Gayā Śrāddha and Gayāwāls* in JASB, 1903, No. 1, p. 6.

2 "The number of *pindas* varies with the number of ancestors for whom the *srāddhas* are celebrated, and the size of the balls and the materials of which they are composed differ according to the caste and the country of those who perform the rite." *Religious Life and Thought in India* by Monier Williams, p. 311. It will be noticed that the Vaishṇava manual does not prescribe any oblations that involve the slaughter of animal life or the offering of any food other than vegetarian . But the *Agni-Purāṇa*, 117.44-48, quoting the views of Kātyāyana, attaches greater importance to oblations consisting of fish and meat. "Oblations composed of cereals grown in villages as well as forest fruits, bulbs and roots last one's forefathers for a month, while those consisting of fishes and venison would serve them well for double or triple that division of time.........The departed souls are supposed to live satisfactorily upon goat's meat for six months, meat of tortoise, pork, mutton, and buffalo flesh lasting them for seven, eight, nine and ten months respectively. Sweetened porridge and butter of cowmilk offered in a clarified state would gratify them for a whole year, while the meat of a full grown sacrificial goat as well as the sword of a rhinoceros, flesh of an antelope or that of a red goat and honey should be considered as their full and proper ration........Offerings made during the rainy season should consist of fishes having large scales."

undying fig tree. The Phalgu is......peculiarly associated with *śrāddha* ceremonies, as Sītā here offered a *pinda* of sand, in default of rice, to the spirit of Daśarath, the father of Rāma. Here the pilgrim begins his round by a *sankalpa*, *i.e.*, a vow to perform all the rites duly, and this is followed by *tarpana*, or homage offered to the spirits of the departed, with water, *kusa* grass and sesamum seed. Then comes the full *srāddha* with sandal wood, betel-leaves, etc. and small lighted lamps. The rites of bathing, *tarpana* and *pindadān* are repeated, one or more of them, at all the *vedis* subsequently visited......at the end of his pilgrimage he (is to offer) *pindas* to the spirits of his ancestors and gifts to the Gayāwal, before whom he (is to prostrate) himself in worship. The Gayāwal (is to touch) him on the back and (bless) him by pronouncing the word *suphal*, assuring him thereby that his worship has been 'fruitful,' *i.e.*, that he has secured salvation for his ancestors and blessings for himself."

3. LEGEND OF GAYĀSURA—MITRA'S INTERPRETATION

In discussing Dr. Buchanan Hamilton's opinion about the story of Gayâsura representing it as "a monstrous legend" Dr. Rajendralala Mitra admits that "at first sight nothing can appear more absurd and stupid than this story," offending, as it does, "every sense of propriety," and having "not even the merit of ingenuity in its narration." "The Brahmayoni Hill, which is the same with the Kolāhala Mountain, is scarcely three miles in length, and the idea of locating on it a being 125 *yojanas*, or 576 miles, in height and 268 miles in girth would never strike the poorest fabler.

........The helplessness of the gods to keep down a prostrate monster, and their futile attempts to prevent his moving, are as childish as possible."[1]

At the same time, he argues in his usual forcible style of Indian advocacy: "(The author of the legend) was not wanting in intelligence, for he discusses many abstruse questions of philosophy with considerable tact and ingenuity; he possessed, too, sufficient insight into human character to know what would command ready credence and what would be rejected at first sight as worthless......to reject, therefore, the story as absurd would, in my mind, appear hasty, and indicative of idle impatience."[2]

Proposing to play the part of "the philosophic historian," he suggests that "something esoteric is hidden under the garb of an extravagant fable," and that the esoteric meaning may be easily found, "if the legend be taken as an allegory of the success of Brahmanism over Buddhism."[3]

He has sought to bring home this allegorical meaning by elucidating the following points:

(1) "Gaya is called an *Asura*, which ordinarily means a Titan, a demon, a vicious monster, a reviler of gods and religion; but he has not been portrayed as such. He revels not in crime, he injures none, and offends neither the gods nor religion by word or deed. On the contrary, he is described as a devout Vaishnava, who devoted himself to rigorous penance, to long protracted meditations, and to the acquirement of the highest purity of body and soul; one whose

[1] *Buddha Gayā*, pp. 14-15. [2] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 16. [3] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 16.

very touch sufficed to cleanse mankind of the greatest sin, and to translate them to heaven. The most serious charge brought against him was that he made salvation too simple and summary. The epithet in his case can therefore, only mean that he did not profess the faith of the Brahmans, nor follow their ways ; in short, he was a heretic. This character has always been assigned to the chiefs among the Buddhists. They were pious, they were self-mortifying, they devoted themselves greatly to penance and meditation ; but they did away with the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Brahmans, and Gaya, therefore, may safely be taken to be a personification of Buddhism."[1]

(2) "His body measured 576—268 miles ; and the country from Kalinga to the Himâlaya, and from Central India to Bengal—the area over which Buddhism had spread at the time when the legend was written,- covered fully that space, and a great deal more."[2]

(3) "The attempt of the gods to put down the head of the monster typifies the attempts of the Hindus to assail Buddhism at its inspiring centre, the head-quarters ; and the thwack of Vishnu's mace indicates the resort which had been made to force when religious preaching had failed to attain that end."[3]

(4) "The rock of religion [*i.e., Dharmaśilā*] was placed

[1] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 17. [2] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 17. [3] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 17.

on the head of the infidel, and the force of the gods kept it fixed and immovable. It was the blessing of the gods, too, which sanctified the seat of Buddhism into a principal sanctuary of the Hindu faith."[1]

(5) "The prominent position which the impression of Buddha's feet occupies in the most sacred temple of the place, the Vishnupad affords a strong proof in this respect, for nowhere else within the length and breadth of India has the worship of footmarks received so high a place in the cultus of the Hindus."[2]

(6) "Nor were the Hindus satisfied with appropriating the Buddhist sanctuaries of Gayā to their worship. They repeatedly assigned to Vishnu epithets which were purely Buddhistic, and did not even let alone the term Buddha itself. They likewise attempted to take all the leading Buddhist places of note, such as Rājagriha, Gridhrakūṭa, Buddha Gayā, as sacred in their creed."[3]

5. O'MALLEY'S CONTENTION AND COUNTER-THEORY

Referring to the legend of Gayâsura on which the Gayāwāls base their claims to be considered first of Brāhmanas and in which Dr. Rajendralala Mitra finds an allegory of the triumph of Hinduism over Buddhism between the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, Mr. O'Malley in his

[1] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 17. [2] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 18. [3] *Buddha Gayā*, p. 18.

instructive paper on *Gayā Śrāddha and Gayāwāls*, propounds a counter-theory offering the following criticism of Dr. Mitra's interpretation :—

(1) "It is difficult to extract a substratum of truth from Indian mythology, which has been stigmatized by one writer as an incrustation of dead matter or to deduce conclusions from the distances given among the fantasies of a Hindu legend. The demon, moreover, is represented throughout as a devout worshipper of Vishnu and quite obedient to him, though the premise is that he represents the antithesis of Vishnuism."[1]

(2) "Hindu mythology is, however, full of instances of holy men, whose penances would force the kingdom of Heaven, and whom the gods therefore crush like Gaya."[2]

(3) "If the theory of Dr. Rajendralala Mitra be correct, the origin of the *Gayā-Śrāddha* and of the Gayāwāls, must be put in the early centuries of the Christian era. Fa Hian, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited India 399-413 A.D., found in his travels both Brāhmana and Buddhist priests ; the temples of both religions flourishing side by side, but Gayā was desolate and deserted. The great Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, who visited Gayā in the course of his long pilgrimage (629-645) A.D. found it a Hindu town with a small population and a thousand families of

[1] *JASB*, 1903, p. 3. [2] *JASB*, 1903, p. 3.

Brāhmanas, the descendants of a Rishi, who were highly respected by the people and exempted by the king from the service of vassals. Even Bodh Gayā, the birth-place of Buddhism, he found, was given over to the Brahmanical idolater. Are we to consider these Brāhmanas the first Gayāwāls? There is nothing to show they presided over any *Srāddha*; and further, it has been stated in the early years of the last century that the universal opinion was that "five or six centuries ago Gayā as a place of pilgrimage was in comparative obscurity, when probably the legend now current was invented and adapted to prevailing opinions."[1]

(4) "The Gayāwāls themselves profess as their religion the Vaishnavism established by the Drāvira Brāhmana, Mādhavâchāryya, in southern India, during the fourteenth century A.D. and acknowledge as their spiritual head the Mahānt of Hari Narasiṃhapura, a connection still kept up, as evinced by a visit he paid to Gayā some ten years ago."[2]

As regards his own theory, Mr. O'Malley seems inclined to think: "The *Gayā Srāddha* is essentially a gloomy rite intimately associated with the terrors of the nether world and far removed from the Vaishnavism of Jagannātha. The conception of the state of evil roaming spirits, who are to be saved by offering, is not distinctively Hindu and appears to warrant a suggestion that the worship bound up

[1] *JASB*, 1903, p. 4. [2] *JASB*, 1903, p. 4.

with the Gayāwāls represents an amalgamation with the popular demonolatry which preceded Brahmanism and has co-existed with it The Hindu abhorrence of Magadha is usually explained by its having been the ancient home of Buddhism......May not this feeling be as fairly attributed to the dislike of Magadha as a home of aboriginal peoples, beliefs, and cults? In the Gayā district to this day we find the prevalent form of religion consists in the propiation of evil spirits, while in Gayā itself there seem to be much of the same belief under the cloak of orthodoxy."[1]

6. CRITICISM OF MITRA'S INTERPRETATION

To criticise Dr. Rajendralala Mitra's philosophic-historical interpretation of the legend of Gayâsura is mainly to reiterate Mr. O'Malley's arguments against it and strengthen them with new data from literature and inscriptions. The three points that deserve consideration are: (1) whether or no, the demon Gaya can be taken to be a personification of Buddhism; (2) whether or no, the dimension of the demon's body can be taken to represent the area of the portion of India from Kaliṅga to the Himâlaya and from Central India to Bengal over which Buddism had spread at the time when the legend was first written ,say, during the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era; and (3) whether or no, the legend of Gayâsura can, upon the whole, be regarded as an allegory of the triumph of Brahmanical Hinduism over Buddhism.

I. Our difficulties in taking Gayâsura as a personifica-

[1] *JASB*, 1903, p. 6.

tion of Buddhism are indeed many. In the first place, piety may be pointed out as a Buddhist quality but certainly not the practice of self-mortification (*atta-kilamatha*) which is put down in Buddhism as one of the two extremes (*dve antā*) to be avoided by a true follower of the religion of the Middle Path.[1] Even piety is not exclusively a Buddhist virtue, it being a common element in all religions. There is, moreover, nothing in the action of the demon to show that it is any way anti-Brahmanical or un-Hindu. If he had tried, as is claimed by Dr. Mitra, to make salvation too simple and summary, he did so only on the strength of the boon granted by the gods and highest deities, Brahmā, Śiva and Vishṇu, of the Hindu pantheon. Reading between the lines, one may easily detect that the real motive behind the legend is not to indicate the anti-Brahmanical or un-Hindu mode of the demon's action but to impress on popular minds by the artifice of a fabler the high sanctity of the Gayā range of hills extending along the western bank of the Phalgu.

It is difficult to associate the demon Gaya with Buddhism for the simple reason that he figures nowhere in its long tradition. On the other hand, Gaya, Namuchi or Vritra is represented in the Vedic texts as a demon of death, darkness and destruction who is a veritable rival and enemy of Indra, the wielder of thunder. In explaining the Vedic allegory of the three strides of Vishṇu or the Sun,[2] Yāska in his Nirukta (Daivata-kāṇḍa, 6.19) quotes the views of

[1] See *Dhammachakka-Pavattana-Sutta in the Vinaya Mahāvagga, the Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, the *Lalita-Vistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, and the *Buddha-charita*.

[2] Ordinarily known as Vishṇu's *tripāda-vikrama*. The *Vedic passage is*: *Idaṃ Vishṇur vichakrame tredhā nidadhe padaṃ*.

two earlier commentators, Śākapūrṇi and Aurṇanābha, who suggested two altogether different interpretations, one offered with reference to the yearly course of the sun and the other with reference to his daily course. In accordance with Śākapūrṇi's view, the three strides are to be explained as signifying "when Vishṇu sets his feet on the earth (*prṛthīvyām*), on the firmament (*antarīkshe*), and on the heaven above it (divi)."[1] Divested of allegory, Śākapūrṇi's interpretation is taken to explain the three strides as meaning "when the Sun is in his northerly course (*uttarāyaṇa*), at the meeting point of two courses, that is to say, at one of the equinoxes, and in his southerly course (*dakshiṇāyana*)." According to Aurṇanābha, the same must be taken to mean "when (the Sun is) on the rising point (samārohaṇe), in his position in the meridian (Vishṇupade, the 'Vishṇu's foot-path), and in his stand on Gaya's head' at the time of setting (Gayaśirasi)."[2] Consistently with Vedic mythology, one can say that Gayaśira, the "Gaya's head," is the same term as Gayâsuraśira, the "head of the demon Gaya." It is here, then, in the Vedic legend of the demon Gaya and in the Vedic allegory of Vishṇu's three strides and Aurṇanābha's interpretation thereof that we can happily trace the nucleous of the magnified legend of Gayâsura in the Vāyu and Agni Purāṇas.

If it be contended that the demon Gaya as Gaya may not figure in Buddhist legends but he does as Namuchi, the reply is that Namuchi or Māra figures in Buddhism

[1] "*Yad idaṃ kiṃcha tad vikramate Vishṇus tridhā nidhatte padaṃ tredhā-bhāvāya prithivyāṃ, antarīkshe, divī" ti Sākapūrṇiḥ.*

[2] "*Samārohaṇe Vishṇupade Gayaśirasī" tyaurṇanābhaḥ.*

invariably as its enemy and far other than its personification.[1]

Gaya was born, no doubt, in the race of mighty Asuras, and as an Asura, he may indeed be supposed to have been by the tradition of his race a tenacious and artful rival of the gods. One may even freely concede that the Gayā-māhātmya has changed the character and elevated the position of Gayâsura of Vedic mythology by representing him as a devout Vaishṇava or Vishṇu-worshipper. But this is not the only instance in the Purāṇas where an *Asura* is represented as a devout worshipper of Vishṇu. Prahlāda, the son of the *Asura-king* Hiraṇyakaśipu, figures in the legend of the Vishṇu-Purāṇa as a glorious character for his unsurpassed and unflinching devotion to Vishṇu. It is not to be supposed that the amelioration of the religious condition of some of the *Asuras* took place only in the popular legends of mediæval or later mediæval period. It may be satisfactorily proved that the tradition of the piety of Prahlāda is really very old; it is at least as old as the time when the dialogues in the Pāli Nikāyas took their final shape,—the dialogues which are of a pre-Christian, and even of a pre-Aśokan date. The *Asura*-prince Prahlāda who figures in the legend of the Vishṇu-Purāṇa as an outstanding personality among the worshippers of Vishṇu has been represented in one of those Pāli dialogues as a sensible worshipper of the Buddha. In this interesting dialogue, Prahlāda (Pāli Pahārāda) has been described as an *Asurinda*, or king of the *Asuras*, who loved to roam about in the waters of the deep.[2]

[1] *Padhāna-Sutta* in the *Sutta-Nipāta* and its mixed Sanskrit version in the *Lalita-Vistara.*

[2] *Aṅguttara-Nikāya,* Part IV, pp. 197-204.

And in Hindu mythology, too, the *Asuras* appear as the most powerful rivals of the gods in the churning of the ocean for the nectar that would give them immortal life.

The conventional art of impressing the importance of an act of religion or of moral virtue, practised by some one, by representing it as causing fear to the gods of losing their happy abodes in heaven and as impelling them to dissuade him by some artifice from practising that act any further is not peculiar to Hindu legends. It is an Indian art tried alike by the Hindu and the Buddhist writers. There are several Buddhist Birth-stories, in which any extraordinary practice of virtue is said to have caused the heaven of Śakra to tremble, the throne of Śakra to glow with heat, and Śakra himself to apprehend the chance of being driven from his high estate Attention might, for instance, be drawn to such Jātakas as the Uraga (Fausböll, No. 154), the Sambula (No. 519), the Mūgapakkha (No. 538), and the Vessantara (No. 547). The Jātaka which has a direct bearing upon the point at issue is, however, the Alambusa (No. 523) which gives the following description of the meditation and penances practised by the youthful ascetic Isisiṅga (Ṛishya-śṛiṅga) :

"Isisiṅga lived in the Himālayan region revelling in the ecstasy of meditation, practising rigorous penances and annihilating the senses. So potent was the effect of his virtue that it shook the palace of Sakka. Sakka reflecting and knowing the cause of it, thought 'The fellow, (meseems), will bring me down from my estate ! I will forthwith send down a lovely heavenly maiden to destroy his virtue and frustrate his ambition."

It was certainly not noble on the part of the king of the gods to play such a trick to upset the vow of a man in fear of losing his estate. But the purpose of the fabler's art was apparently to throw the intensity and seriousness of Isisiṅga's act of virtue into clear relief. And what is in this respect true of the Buddhist story of Isisiṅga, is equally true of the magnified Hindu legend of Gayâsura.

It would seem that Dr. Mitra has put the cart before the horse in maintaining that the prominence of the Hindu worship of the footprint of Vishṇu in the Vishṇupada temple in the town of Gayā was originally due to the prominence accorded by the Buddhists to the impression of Buddha's feet in their most sacred temple at Bodh Gayā. As we shall try to show in Book II, the present Bodh Gayā temple of the Buddhists had not come into existence when Fa Hian visited the place in the first quarter of the 5th Century A.D. Furthermore, neither Fa Hian nor Hwen Thsang saw any footprints of the Buddha there, not to speak of their worship or of its prominence. The impression of Buddha's feet to be seen on the west side of the existing Bo-tree and side by side with the foot mark of Vishṇu, the mace-bearer, was set up, as proved by the circular shape of the dressed slab of stone bearing the impression, in comparatively recent times. And none can say that it enjoys any prominence, compared with the importance attached to the worship of the Bo-Tree and the Diamond-throne. We may venture to say that it is not only at Bodh-Gayā but in all Buddhist holy places, where Buddha's footmarks appear among the objects of worship, these occupy but an unimportant position. At all events, there is not a single

instance known to us where the footmarks of the Buddha are worshipped by the Buddhists in the manner of the Hindu worship of Vishṇupada for the release of the departed spirits of their forefathers. Dr. Kern who has discussed this point in some detail, has rightly remarked : "The origin and history of the *Srīpadas* are as yet wrapt in darkness, but we have sufficient data to warrant the inference that their worship is connected with the strides, *vikramas*, of Purushottama, Vishṇu (the Vedic allegory of the three strides of Vishṇu and Aurṇanābha's interpretation thereof)."[1]

The last point in Dr. Mitra's argument is the appropriation by the Hindus of the Buddhist sanctuaries of Gayā to their worship which they had done along with the appropriation of the epithets of the Buddha to the extolling of Vishṇu, their supreme deity. We have every reason to doubt if Gayā proper or Benares proper was at any time a site for Buddhist sanctuaries. And regarding the appropriation of epithets, it is yet to be determined whether the Buddhists were guilty of transferring the epithets of Vedic Vishṇu to the Buddha or the Hindus of applying the epithets of the Buddha to Vishṇu. One fact is certain that none of the peculiarly Buddhistic epithets of the Buddha, such as *Sāstā*, *Sugata*, *Tathāgata*, and *Samyak Sambuddha* is to be found among the epithets of the Hindu deity.

Thus considered from all points of view, it would appear that Dr. Mitra has raised a mere presumption without being able to prove his case. No one can reasonably on the

[1] *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 98.

strength of his argument take the Gayāsura of the Gayā-māhātmya to be a personification of Buddhism.

II. We cannot reasonably appreciate Dr. Mitra's ingenious suggestion that the legendary bulk of the giant's body, 125 *yojanas* (equated with 576 miles) in height and 60 yojanas (equated with 268 miles) in girth, may be taken to represent the area of that part of India over which Buddhism had spread at the time when the Gayā-māhātmya was first written, say, during the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era. We must plead our ignorance as to the correctness of the proposed identification of the Kolāhala-giri (the Hill-in-commotion) on which Gayāsura is believed to have practised rigorous austerities and his gigantic body is said to have rested at full length, with the Brahmayoni hill in the town of Gayā. It will be a flagrant misrepresentation, we think, of the account in the Hindu legend to try to expose its absurdity by contrasting the hugeness of the bulk of the giant's body with the smallness of the size of the Brahmayoni hill. For the Gayā-māhātmya makes no secret of the fact that when the body of the giant or demon (*asura, daitya*) was stretched on the ground, his head rested on the Gayā range of hills, his navel rested on the Virajā hill (at Jajpur in the district of Cuttack)[2] and his feet on the Mahendragiri (which is a hill at Rājamahendri).[3] Further, it expressly says that the giant lay down on the Kolāhala-giri, keeping his head towards the north (more accurately, the north-west), his feet towards the south (more accurately,

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.42.
[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.85.
[3] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.86.

the south-west),[1] and his face turned towards the river Phalgu.[2]

"Jajipur which is a town in the district of Cuttack is further esteemed," says Mr. Stirling, "from its being supposed to rest on the navel of the tremendous giant or demon, called the Gayā Asur, who was overthrown by Vishnu. Such was his bulk that when stretched on the ground, his head rested at Gayā, his navel (*nābhi*) at this place, and his feet at a spot near Rājamahendri. There is a very sacred well or pit within the enclosure of one of the Jajipur temples, called the Gayā-Nābhi or Bamphi, which is fabled to reach to the navel of the monster, and into it the Hindu pilgrims throw the *pinda*, or cake of rice, and sweetmeats, which is offered at particular conjunctions as an expiation for the sins of their ancestors."[3]

The Gayā-māhātmya distinctly says that just as on the Gayāśira hill of Gayā, so on the Virajā hill (of Jājpur) on which the image of the goddess called Virajā[4] is installed and the Mahendragiri (of Rājamahendri) a man may offer *piṇḍa* for the release of the departed spirits of his forefathers. From a comparative view of the efficacy of *piṇḍa* offered, the Gayā range of hills is the *śira* or principal Gayā because by performing the funeral rites here a man may aspire to

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.32-33 :
Ityuktvā so'patad bhūmau Śvetakalpe Gayāsuraḥ. |
Nairitaṃ diśaṃ āśritya tadā Kolāhale girau ||
Śiraḥ kṛitvottare daityaḥ pādau kṛitvā tu dakshiṇe ||

[2] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 111.44.

[3] Quoted in the *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, p. 61, from *An account of Orissa Proper or Cuttack* by A. Stirling.

[4] Jājpur in Orissa is popularly known now-a-days as *Virajā-kshetra* and *Varāha-kshetra*, the sanctity of the place being derived from the presence of the image of the goddess Virajā and that of the Boar incarnation of Vishṇu.

attain the world of Brahmā; the Virajā hill is the *nābhi* or intermediate Gayā because by offering *piṇḍa* here one may liberate twenty-one generations of one's forefathers; and the Mahendragiri is the *pāda* or inferior Gayā because by offering *piṇḍa* here one may liberate just seven generations of one's forefathers,[1] the term Gayā being taken to signify the sanctified spot or sacred place for the offering of *piṇḍa* for the liberation of departed spirits.[2]

From the statement that Kolāhala was the *giri* which ran north-west and south-west and on which the body of the giant rested at full length with his head on the Gayā range of hills, navel on the Virajā hill and feet on the Mahendragiri, the conclusion is irresistible that Kolāhala, as known to the author of the Gayā-māhātmya, was not the name of a particular hill, such as the Brahmayoni, but that of a long chain connecting the Gayāśira hill with the Virajā at Jajpur and the Mahendragiri at Rājamahendri. If so, the stated bulk of the giant's body must be taken to symbolise not the area over which Buddhism had spread but the area in legendary estimate over which the hills composing the Kolāhala chain were known to have been distributed.

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 106.84-86:
Lokāḥ puṇyā Gayāyāṃ ye śrāddhino Brahmalokagāḥ |
* * * * * * *
Ākrāntaṃ daitya-jaṭharaṃ dharmeṇa Virajādriṇā |
Nābhikūpa-samīpe tu devī yā Virajā sthitā ||
Tatra piṇḍādikaṃ kṛitvā triḥsapta-kulaṃ uddharet |
Mahendragiriṇā tasya kṛitau pādau suniśchalau ||
Tatra piṇḍādikaṃ kṛitvā saptakulān uddharate narāḥ ||

[2] Reckoning the Gayā range of hills as the *śira* Gayā, in modern times some people locate the *nābhi* or intermediate Gayā on a hill in Ayodhyā (the district of Oudh) and the *pāda* or inferior Gayā on the Chandranāth hill at Sītākuṇḍa in the district of Chittagong. The account in the Gayā-māhātmya contains, however, no justification for this.

The height of one hundred and twenty-five *yojanas* and the girth of sixty *yojanas* as legendary measurement of the giant's body cannot seriously be taken to denote an area covering so wide a space as one from Kaliṅga to the Himālaya and from Central India to Bengal. The description in terms of *yojanas* is indeed far from giving an accurate measurement. The Gayā-māhātmya definitely says that the height of the giant's body was co-extensive with the Kolāhala chain connecting the Gayāśira hill in the north-west with the Mahendragiri in the south-west. For forming an idea of the intended space one must take guidance from this rather than from the *yojanas*.

If, according to the Gayā-māhātmya, the head of the giant had not extended beyond the Gayā range of hills, it will be preposterous to talk about the extension of the intended space from Kaliṅga to the Himālaya and from Central India to Bengal. The Himālaya mountain is far, far off, from Gayā, and the expression from Central India to Bengal suffers from its extreme vagueness. Obviously, the Hindu legend delimits the intended space to a chain of hills, the Kolāhalagiri, which was believed to have run north-west and south-west from Gayā to Rājamahendri *via* Jajpur in Orissa proper.

If the Gayā-māhātmya were, as presumed by Dr. Mitra, a composition of the third or fourth century A.D., it would be just to betray one's ignorance of the history of Buddhism, to imagine that the bulk of the giant's body determined by the extension of the Kolāhala range of hills might be taken to represent the area of that part of India over which Buddhism had spread at that time. The suggested date of

composition of the Hindu legend is very nearly the same as that of the pilgrimage of Fa Hian. As clearly attested by the travels of Fa Hian and such other authentic evidences as the commentaries of Buddhaghosha, the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, the inscriptions of King Aśoka, the numerous Buddhist inscriptions of post-Aśokan and pre-Gupta dates, the manuscript remains of Buddhist literature found in E. Turkestan, the various ancient sites of Buddhist *stūpas,* monasteries and other sanctuaries and the general traditions of the Buddhists, by this time Buddhism had spread not only over the whole of India from Kāndāhār to Bengal and from the foot of the Himālaya to Cape Comorine but also over China, Mongolia, Ceylon and Central Asia. If such were the expansion of Buddhism at that time, compared with its personification, the giant Gayâsura with his monstrous body would appear as a mere pigmy.

If the legendary *yojana*-measurement of the giant's body be still pressed as a point of argument, even then the stated bulk of 125 *yojanas* in height and 60 *yojanas* in girth may certainly be shown to be too small to bear comparison with the area covered by the expansion of Buddhism. We may leave aside the state of things that prevailed in the early centuries of the Christian era. Let us go back to the days of King Aśoka, to the third century B.C., and ascertain what had happened then. In the Second Rock Edict, His Sacred Majesty says that at the time when this edict was promulgated he had arranged for two kinds of treatment and caused other philanthropic or humanitarian works to be done throughout his own dominions as well as in the outlying unconquered tracts including the

principalities of five Greek allies in the north-west and the countries of Chola, Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra, Keralaputra as far south as Tambapaṃni or Ceylon. And in the Thirteenth Rock Edict, we are told that his instructions on the laws and ideals of piety and morality were followed both within his own empire and outside it, in the neighbouring principalities of the five Greek rulers and the countries of Chola, Pāṇḍya and the rest, all together covering a vast space of 600 *yojanas* (in length as well as in breadth).[1] In spite of the universal character of Aśoka's *Dhamma*, it cannot be doubted that it was mainly inspired by Buddhism in the sense that its principles are wholly consistent with the teaching of Buddhism and not wholly inconsistent with the tenets other religions then known to him.

Thus considered in the light of these facts, Dr. Mitra's suggestion regarding the interpretation of the monstrous bulk of the giant's body must be rejected at once as utterly fallacious and misleading, the stated height of the giant's body being co-extensive with the length of the Kolāhala range running north-west and south-west from Gayā to Rājamahendri *via* Jājpur in Orissa proper.

III. The discussion has reached at last a point where we may conveniently face the question as to whether, if at all, the Gayā-māhātmya story of Gayāsura can be interpreted as an allegory of the triumph of Brahmanism over Buddhism,—Brahmanism which is taken by Dr. Mitra just as another name for Hinduism. We do not see how

[1] R.E.XIII: *Devanampriyasa hida (rajavishavashi) cha savreshu cha aṃteshu a shashu pi yojana-śateshu.*

this story can be interpreted in the light of such an allegory, there being hardly anything to bear out such a far-fetched interpretation as this. The data furnished by the story go against all hypothesis of antagonism between Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Hindu Holy Land of Gayā, as defined in the Gayā-māhātmya, includes in it Bodh-Gayā, the sacred site of the Buddha-image Dharmeśvara and the Bo-tree *Aśvattha.* The legend enjoins upon each Hindu who undertakes pilgrimage to Gayā to visit this holy site and worship the Buddha-image and the Bo-tree for the release of the departed spirits of his forefathers. From the prescribed formula of prayer, it appears that the Bo-tree was viewed as a very special object of worship to the Hindus, it being extolled as a living manifestation of the divinity of the Hindu Triad.[1]

If it be argued that even admitting all these data to be true, the fact remains that the Gayā-māhātmya story bears clear evidence of a sectarian prejudice against Buddhism when it relates that the Brahmins of Gayā incurred the displeasure of Brahmā by conducting the worship of Dharma-Dharmeśvara at Dharmāraṇya and receiving fees and gifts in return of their service. But it is easy to understand that the Gayā-māhātmya explanation for the miseries of the Brahmins of Gayā is far from indicating antagonism between Hinduism and Buddhism. The legend definitely mentions

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa,* 100. 7-29:
Namas te Aśvattha-rājāya Brahmā-Vishṇu-Śivātmane |
Bodhi-drumāya karttṛiṇām pitṛiṇāṃ tāraṇāya cha ||
"Ye asmat kule mātṛivaṃśe bāndhavā durgatiṃ gatāḥ |
Tad darśanāt sparśanāch cha svargatiṃ yāntu śāśvatīm ||
Riṇatrayaṃ mayā dattaṃ Gayām āgatya vṛiksharāṭ |
Tvad prasādān mahāpāpād vimukto 'haṃ bhavārṇavāt ||

that the term of the liberal gifts made by Brahmā to the Brahmins of Gayā was that they must remain satisfied with what they received from him and must neither demand nor actually accept gifts from any other hand. But they being led by greed, conducted the worship of the Buddha-image at Bodh-Gayā and accepted fees and gifts in return of their service, and for that they were cursed by Brahmā and deprived of his favours. If one would term it sectarian prejudice, this prejudice was not precisely against Buddhism but rather against aggrandisement of the privileges which were not originally intended for the Brahmins of Gayā. The historical bearing of the explanation is that originally the jurisdiction of the Brahmins of Gayā was limited to Brahma-Gayā or Gayā proper and it was considered against all laws of fairness and equity that they should go beyond their own jurisdiction and enjoy the privileges that were not meant for them.

It is not difficult to imagine that the following two allegories are in the immediate background of the magnified legend of Gayāsura : (1) the Vedic allegory of three strides of Vishṇu explained by Aurṇanābha in the light of three stations of the sun during his daily course (*samārohaṇe, Vishṇupade, Gayaśirasi*), and (2) the Pauranic or cosmogonic allegory of upheaval of the Kolāhala chain of hills in general and of the Gayā range in particular by the action of tremendous natural forces. The first allegory is astronomical and the second geological in its main conception.

Viewed in astronomical perspective, the Holy Land of Gayā is to present the picture of a cosmographic chart of the heaven above with visible representations of its principal

dwellers, the sun, the planets and the stars, and with a fanciful location of the Milky Way, the three stations of the sun in the sky during his daily course and the three stations of the sun in the sky during his annual course. The sun on the rising point (*samārohaṇe*) is emblamatic of childhood, the sun in the meridian (*Vishṇupade*) is emblamatic of glorious youth, and the sun on the vanishing point (*Gayaśirasi*) is emblamatic of old age or death.

Turning to the the Pauranic or cosmogonic allegory we find that the Gayā-māhātmya relegates the upheaval of the Kolāhala chain of hills to a remote geological period called *Śveta-vārāha-kalpa.*[1] The name Kolāhala ("the hill in commotion") is significant as suggesting that the chain designated by it was believed to have been originally a volcanic range. The various *kuṇḍa*s or hot springs, many of which have now cooled down, may be regarded as proofs of thermo-dynamic action.[2] There was, as late as the 7th century A.D., an active volcano in the adjoining district of Monghyr, as will be evident from Hwen Thsang's description of the Hiraṇya-parvata, identified by Beal with the Monghyr hill (Modagiri, Mudgagiri): "By the side of the capital and bordering on the Ganges river is the Hiraṇya (I-lan-na) mountain, from which is belched forth masses

[1] *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, 105. 7:
Śvetakalpe tu Vārāhe Gayo yāgam akārayat |

Cf. The geological account in the *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, pp. 9-10: "The greater part of the district is occupied by the Gangetic alluvium, but older rocks rise above ts level chiefly in the south and east. These rocks are composed for the most part of a foliated gneiss, consisting of a great variety of crystalline rocks forming parallel bands and known in the geological nomenclature of India as the Bengal gneiss, a subdivision of the Archaean system which contains the oldest rocks of the earth's crust."

[2] C. *District Gazetteer of Monghyr*, p. 5 and p. 29, for expert opinion on the point.

of smoke and vapour which obscure the light of the sun and moon. From old time till now Rishis and saints have come here in succession to repose their spirits. Now there is a *Deva* temple here, in which they still follow their rules handed down to them."[1]

While by volcanic action or by the action of some tremendous natural forces the Kolāhala chain of hills struggled hard to rise up above the ordinary level of the earth aspiring. so to speak, to reach up the highest heaven, these were prevented from rising up beyond a certain low height, being pressed down, as it were, by the dead-weight of a massive block of stone placed on their summit The largest and heaviest of these blocks was the Dharmaśilā or the Stone of Virtue, a curious prodigy of nature which appeared on the summit of the Gayāśira hill proper and supplied afterwards the material for carving the numerous foot-prints, emblems and statues of the deities worshipped at Gayā. Dharmapāla, the author of the Udāna-Commentary, records that there was on the Gayāśira hill a huge block of stone which resembled in shape the crown of an elephant and afforded seats for a thousand persons.[2]

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 187. The author of the *District Gazetteer of Monghyr* observes, on p. 5: "The Kharagpur Hills contain several hot springs, situated near Kachu, at Sringirikh, Bhimbandh, Rishikund, Bhaduria Hill, Sitakund, and, close to the place last named, at Borde and Bainsa Hill. They are probably due to a deep-seated thermo-dynamic action, and it is interesting to find historic testimony to the former existence in this region of an active volcano." "Nearly all these springs," writes Col. Waddell (*JASB*, old series, Vol. LIX, Part II), "are worshipped by the Hindu and semi-aboriginal villagers in the vicinity; for these strange outbursts of heated waters boiling up cauldron-like and wreathed in clouds of vapour are regarded by them as supernatural phenomena and especial expression of the presence of a deity.'.

[2] *Udāna-Vaṇṇana*, Siamese edition, p. 95; *Tattha atthi eko pabbato Gayāsīsa-nāmako yattha hatthikumbha-sadise piṭṭhipāsāṇe bhikkhusahassassa okāso hoti,*

One may try to form some idea of the general appearance of the Gayāśira hill proper with the massive block of stone on its top with the aid of the following account of Kauādol hill, situated nearly one mile to the south-west of the Barābar hills :

"It (rises) abruptly from the plains to the height of about 500 feet ; it is formed entirely of huge masses of granite piled precipitously one above the other, and is crowned by a gigantic block of stone, which is inaccessible. It is said that this pinnacle was topped by another (rocking) block which was......perfectly balanced."[1]

It is interesting indeed to find that the Preta śilā hill which bears the general form of other hills of Gayā has on its top a boulder of appreciable size appearing in its shape like a sitting elephant.

All these considerations may suffice to show that the allegory of the triumph of Brahmanical Hinduism over Buddhism is out of the question. The Vedic allegory of the three strides of Vishṇu as explained by Aurṇanābha and the Pauranic allegory of the upheaval of the granite hills of the Kolāhala chain by volcanic action lie at the back of the Gayā-māhātmya story of Gayāsura.

7. CRITICISM OF O'MALLEY'S COUNTER-THEORY

We cannot but welcome Mr. O'Malley's suggestion that "the worship bound up with the Gayāwāls represents an amalgamation with the popular demonolatry which preceded Brhmanism and has co-existed with it." The upshot

[1] *District Gazetteer of Gayā*, p. 227.

of it is that the history of this demonolatry representing the beliefs and cults of the aboriginal peoples who lived in Magadha is not only pre-Buddhistic but pre-Brahmanic. As a suggestion for future investigations, it is alright. But the crux is—can this be deduced from the data yielded by the Eulogium of Gayā? Would it be right at all to presume on the evidence of this later legendary Eulogium that Yama who prominently figures as a god of the Vedic pantheon was a pre-Vedic aboriginal deity? We have already shown that Mr. O'Malley's suggestion is based on misinterpretation of certain verses in the Gayā-māhātmya (*ante*, p. 31). The inferior position of the Dhāmis representing a special section of the Brahmins of Gayā who officiate as priests at five *vedis*, specially sacred to Yama, does not prove the case. There is nothing to show that they are descendants of aboriginal priests.

8. ANTIQUITY OF THE GAYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA

There is a sharp difference of opinion regarding the antiquity of the Eulogium of Gayā in the form in which it is presented in the concluding section of the Vāyu-Purāṇa. Dr. Rajendralala Mitra places its date of composition in the early centuries of the Christian era, and definitely assigns it to the third or fourth century A.D. Mr. O'Malley, on the other hand, inclines to regard it as a legend invented probably in the fourteenth or fifteenth century A.D. They have nothing whatever to say regarding the date of composition of the Agni-Purāṇa version or of the version which may be traced in the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the numerous Smṛiti-compilations.

Confining our observations to the Vāyu-Purāṇa version, it is difficult to agree with Dr. Mitra in assigning it to early centuries of the Christian era, and to differ materially from Mr. O'Malley who regards the legend as an invention of the fourteenth or fifteenth century A.D. It will, however, be noticed that the data upon which Mr. O'Malley bases his opinion are suggestive but not sufficiently convincing. The data relied upon by him are these: (1) that the Gayāwāls whose claim to pre-eminence among the Brahmins rests on the sole scriptural authority of the Vāyu-Purāṇa version of the Gayā-māhātmya "profess as their religion the Vaishnavism established by the Drāviḍa Brāhmaṇa, Mādhavāchāryya, in southern India, during the fourteenth century A.D. and acknowledge as their spiritual head the Mahānt of Hari Narasiṃhapura, a connection still kept up;" and (2) that in the opinion of Prof. Hara Prasad Sastri "five or six centuries ago Gayā as a place of pilgrimage was in comparative obscurity."

Prof. Hara Prasad Sastri's opinion cannot be mistaken for "the universal opinion" in India, especially when it is based upon the quotation of a certain Sanskrit verse containing an enumeration of certain recognized Hindu holy places that excludes Gayā. The omission of Gayā from a particular list is, after all, an *argumentum ad silentio*, upon which nothing can be definitely built. Similarly the simple fact that the Gayā-māhātmya in the Vāyu-Purāṇa is the scriptural authority of the Gayāwāls and the Gayāwāls themselves profess the Vaishnavism of Mādhavāchāryya who flourished in the fourteenth century is not enough by itself to prove that the Eulogium was a composition of the

fourteenth century, there being nothing explicit or implicit in the Eulogium itself to indicate a connection of the Gayāwāls with the Vaishnavism of Mādhavāchāryya. If the comparative modernity of the Eulogium in the Vāyu or the Agni Purāṇa is to be proved, it must be proved on data other than those brought forward by Mr. O'Malley. What are these new data?

(1) The Gayā-māhātmya, as we have seen, distinguishes three stages of manifestation of the existence of Vishṇu, the mace-bearer: (1) *avyakta*, undeterminate or potential as exemplified by the rocky materials; (2) *vyaktāvyakta*, semi-determinate or merely suggestive as represented by the footprints; and (3) *vyakta*, fully determinate or iconic as represented by the various images set up as objects of veneration. These three stages of manifestation of the existence of the deity of Gayā may be historically interpreted as indicative of three successive periods of the life of Gayā as the Holy Land of the Hindus:—

(1) the first or earliest period when the rocky hills and peaks and the hill-streams alone were venerated as sacred objects, that is to say, when Gayā proper presented a scene of pure nature-worship;

(2) the second or middle period when the human footprints and phallic signs carved in stone constituted the objects of worship as symbols of the holy presence and living recollections of the time-honoured divine personalities; and

(3) the third or last period when idols came to be added for worship as typified human forms of the Divinity.

Inasmuch as the Gayā-māhātmya gives an account of all these three stages, it must have been posterior to the time when the final stage in the process of manifestation had been reached. But we are still groping in the dark as to when the iconic stage was reached and consummated, when, in other words, various images, even including those of Śākta worship (Phalgu-Chaṇḍī, Smaśānākshī, and the rest) had been installed in different shrines or temples.

(2) It is conclusive from the internal evidence of the Eulogium of Gayā that when it was composed in its later legendary form and as a propagandist manual, all classes of Hindu deities, Vedic, Śaiva, Vaishṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya and Śākta, came to be worshipped in their diverse iconic representations in the sanctuaries scattered over Brahma-Gayā. The presiding deity was, of course, Vishṇu, the supreme deity of the Vaishṇavas, adored in his mace-bearing aspect, as Gadādhara. It would be idle to imagine that the images as worshipped were not installed in some shrines or temples erected for them. The erection of shrines or temples would be unnecessary only where some such convenient recesses, structures or edifices as the cave-dwellings in the Barābar and the Nāgārjunī hills were found already in existence. Happily we have epigraphic evidence to show that the shrines or temples were built along with the installation of the images. We can make bold to maintain that none of the temples and images at Gayā proper were built prior to the times of the Pālas of Bengal. As proved by the inscriptions, the temples of Janārdana[1] and

[1] The inscription was discovered in the Krishṇa-Dvārikā temple in the city of Gayā. See the *Gauḍa-lekha-mālā*, pp. 111-115.

Gadādhara[1] were built by Viśvāditya, son of Śūdraka and grandson of Paritosha, in the 15th regnal year of King Nayapāladeva who died in 1045 A.D.,[2] and the temples of Vaṭeśa and Prapitāmaheśvara were built by the piety of the same Viśvāditya just in the 5th regnal year of Vigrahapāla III[3] whose date is certainly subsequent to that of Nayapāladeva.[4] An undated Sanskrit inscription of Yakshapāla, son of Viśvāditya and grandson of Śūdraka, written in "a kind of Devanāgarī, which appears to have been current in the 12th century A.D.,"[5] records that he "caused to be made an image of the Sun-god called Maunâditya, a phallic symbol of Śiva called Sahasraliṅga, an image of Nārāyaṇa, lord of Kamalā, a phallic symbol of Śiva called Dvistomeśvara, another phallic symbol of Śiva called Phalgunātha, an image of the Sun-god called Vijayâditya, and another phallic symbol of Śiva called the god Kedāra along with temples erected to serve as abodes for the respective deities; and (that) he likewise caused the famous Uttaramānasa (tank) to be excavated and (established) a hall of charity on the site of the Akshaya-vaṭa."[6] If we

[1] The inscription was discovered inside the temple of Narasiṃhadeva built on the courtyard of the temple of Gadâdhara. See the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, p. 78.

[2] R. D. Banerji's *Bāṅgālār Itihās*, Part I, p. 262.

[3] The inscription was discovered at the foot of the Akshaya-vaṭa at Gayā. See the *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, pp. 81-82. Vaṭesa and Prapitāmaheśvara are two different representations of Śivaliṅga.

[4] See R. D. Banerji's *Bāṅgālār Itihās*, Part I, p. 202, for the chronology of the Pāla kings.

[5] *IA*, 1887, Vol. XVI, *A Gayā inscription of Yakshapāla* edited by F. Kielhorn, p. 63.

[6] *IA*, 1887, Vol. XVI, p. 65, verse 12:
Maunâditya-Sahasraliṅga-Kamalârdhâṅgiṇa-Nārāyaṇa-Dvistomeśvara-Phalgunātha-Vijayâdityâhvāyanāṃ kṛiti |

allow a margin of two or three centuries for the later images and temples mentioned in the Gayā-māhātmya, its date of composition cannot be placed earlier than the 13th or the 14th century A.D.

(3) The Gayā-māhātmya description of the position of the Brahmins of Gayā is historically important as clearly showing that when it was composed, the Holy Land of Gayā lost its pristine glory ,and that the Brahmins had fallen on evil days, in consequence of which they became absolutely dependent for their livelihood on the income from the pilgrims (*tīrthopajīvikā*). This fact may well explain how a semi-romantic propagandist manual, such as this later legendary Eulogium, became a great desideratum for heightening the popularity of Gayā as a place of high sanctity, particularly as the place for offering oblations for the release of the departed spirits.

Although the causes are yet unknown, certain it is that when the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian visited Gayā in the beginning of the 5th century A.D., all within this city was

sa-prāsādam achikarad divishadāṃ Kedāra-devasya cha khyātasyottaramānasasya khanane sattraṃ tathā chākshaye ||

Prof. Kielhorn's translation of this inscription appears faulty and in places quite misleading. His rendering is : "The wise (prince) caused to be built a temple of the inhabitants of heaven called Maunâditya, Sahasraliṅga, Kamala, Ardhâṅgīna, Nārāyaṇa, Dvistomeśvara, Phalgunātha and Vijayâditya, and of the god Kedāra ; he likewise had the famous Uttaramānasa (tank) dug and (established) a hall of charity, to last for ever." It will be at once seen that his translation has missed the force of the expression *sa-prāsāda-divishadām* which literally means "together with a temple which is an abode of the gods." Similarly it errs in construing the word *Kamalārdhâṅgiṇa-Nārāyaṇa* as containing the names of three different deities : Kamala, Ardhâṅgīṇa and Nārāyaṇa. To render the word *Akshaye,* which is in the locative, "to last for ever" is to commit an error excusable neither by the rules of grammar nor by the traditional fame of the Undying Banyan. The verse 14 of Ch. 95 of the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata may claim to clear the whole point at issue :

Akshaye devayajane akshayaṃ yatra vai phalam.

"desolate and desert,"[1] and even subsequently when the great Chinese pilgrim Hwen Thsang visited the same city in the 7th century A.D., it had "but few inhabitants." There were at that time "about one thousand families of Brahmans only" who claimed their descent from a Ṛishi, who were not regarded by the reigning king "as vassals" and whom "the people everywhere highly respected".[2] Such a deplorable state of things must have continued down into the 10th century A.D., otherwise the inscriptions recording the erection of some of the earliest and most important among the existing temples and images and the excavation of the Uttaramānasa tank during the reign of Nayapāladeva, Vigrahapāla III and Yakhṣapāla in the 11th century A.D. and thereafter would be altogether meaningless. If the evidence of these inscriptions is worth anything, it serves only to prove that the history of the present city of Gayā with its numerous images and sanctuaries goes back to the reign of King Nayapāladeva but not earlier in any way.

Nov keeping in view all these three facts, namely, the lost glory of Gayā, the miseries of the Gayā Brahmins and the re-emergence of Gayā into a far-famed place of Hindu pilgrimage, as clearly set forth in the Gayā-māhātmya, the date of its composition cannot but be posterior to the reign of the Pālas of Bengal.

(4) The Gayā-māhātmya says that the Brahmins of Gayā brought down the curse of Brahmā on them when they being led by greed, went out of their jurisdiction to

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. I, p. lxi.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 113.

officiate as priests at the worship of the Buddha-image called Dharma-Dharmeśvara and installed at Dharmâraṇya or Bodh-Gayā.

If the Gayā-māhātmya, as presumed by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, were a composition of the 3rd or the 4th century A.D., it is impossible to imagine that the Brahmins of Gayā would be either allowed or required to conduct the worship of the Buddha-image. For it is equally proved by the inscriptions as well as the itinerary accounts of Fa-Hian and Hwen Thsang that Bodh-Gayā was in the height of its glory as a Holy Land of the Buddhists, there having been three powerful *saṃghârāmas* or monasteries to take care of Buddhist worship and look after the Buddhist shrines of the locality. The services of the Gayā Brahmins would be needed only at the time when there were none among the Buddhists themselves to guard their own shrines, that is to say, when Buddhism was in complete decay. And such a state of things could not be possible before irruption of destructive forces of Islam signalised by Bukhtear's conquest of Bengal in the last quarter of the 12th century.

Thus all the evidences, whether epigraphic or otherwise, point to the same conclusion. *viz.*, that the Gayā-māhātmya as a propagandist manual of the Gayāwāl Brahmins cannot be regarded as dating anterior to the 13th or 14th century A.D.

Though with regard to the Gayā-māhātmya in the Vāyu and the Agni Purāṇas we are compelled to reject the date proposed by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, it will be worth while to consider whether the suggested date is applicable to an earlier version of the Gayā-māhātmya which is embodied

in the Mahābhārata, and the traces of which can be found in certain verses of the Rāmāyaṇa and the late works on Smṛiti. It will be important at the same time to enquire whether and how far it can be established that previous to the full iconic stage of manifestation of the divinity of Gayā there was an earlier stage which was merely suggestive or semi-iconic.

8. EARLIER VERSION OF THE GAYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA

We have been on the look out for an earlier version of the Eulogium which is expected to present a picture of Gayā proper when it had not outlived the semi-iconic or suggestive stage. For a knowledge of the contents of the earlier version we have to depend mainly upon two chapters, chapters 84 and 95, of the Vanaparva forming the third book of the Mahābhārata. But before we actually deal with the Mahābhārata account of the Hindu Holy Land, we may do well to briefly review the references to Gayā in the Rāmāyaṇa and some of the works on Smṛiti.

It will be noticed that in a prose passage representing the oldest stratum of the Vishṇu-saṃhitā, Ch. 85, Pushkara and Gayā have been specified as the two places for performing funeral obsequies of imperishable results, and Gayā proper is represented by the Gayāśirsha hill, the Akshayavaṭa (Undying Banyan), the Vishṇupada (Vishṇu's footprint) and the Phalgutīrtha (bathing ghat of the Phalgu river).[1] Even in the verse-portion Gayā proper has been

[1] *Vishṇu-saṃhitā*, Ch. 85 :
Atha Pushkareshvakshayaśrāddham, evam eva Gayāśirshe, Akshayavaṭe, Vishṇupade, Phalgutīrthe.

represented by the Gayāśīrsha hill ard the Akshaya-vaṭa.[1] And neither in the prose passage nor in the verses is there any mention, implied or explicit, of images or temples.[2] The Uśana-saṃhitā, Ch. 3, mentions the Vārāha hill (same as the Virajā hill of the Vāyu Purāṇa) and Gayā as places for funeral obsequies, according preference to Gayā.[3] The Kātyāyana-saṃhitā, Ch. 3, quotes certain expert views recognising the high sanctity of Gayā as one of the fitting places for offering the cakes of rice (*piṇḍa-dāna*) to the departed souls.[4] The Śaṃkha-saṃhitā, Ch. 14, mentions Gayākshetra, Prabhāsa, Pushkara, Prayāga, Naimishâraṇya, the banks of the Ganges and the Yamunā), Vāmara-kaṇṭaka and the banks of the Narmadā and the Gayā river as the principal places for offering oblations.[5] The Atri-saṃhitā,[6] the Likhita-saṃhitā,[7] the Vasishṭha-

[1] *Vishṇu-saṃhitā*, Ch. 85, verse 66 :
Gayāśīrshe Vaṭe śrāddham.

[2] *Vishṇu-saṃhitā*, Ch. 85, verses 66-67 :
Api jāyate so' smākaṃ kule kaśchin narottamaḥ |
Gayāśīrshe Vaṭe śrāddhaṃ yo naḥ kuryāt samāhitaḥ || 66

[3] *Uśana-saṃhitā*, Ch. 3, verses 132-133 :
Gayāṃ prāpyânushaṅgena yadi śrāddhaṃ samācharet |
tāritāḥ pitaras tena, sa yāti paramāṃ gatim ||
Vārāha-parvate chaiva Gayāñ chaiva viśeshataḥ |

[4] *Kātyāyana-Saṃhitā*, Ch. 3, verse 9 :
Prādhānyaṃ piṇḍadānasya kechid āhur manīshiṇaḥ |
Gayâdau piṇḍamātrasya diyamātrasya diyamānātvadarśanāt ||

[5] *Śaṃkha-saṃhitā*, Ch. 14, verses 1-2 :
Yad dadāti Gayākshetre Prabhāse Pushkare 'pi cha |
Prayāge Naimishâraṇye sarvamānan tam uchyate ||
Gaṅgā-Yamunayos tīre tīrthe Vāmarakaṇṭake |
Narmadāyāṃ Gayā-tīre sarvamānan tam uchyate ||

[6] *Atri-saṃhitā*, verse 56 :
Kāṅkshati pitaraḥ sarve narakântarabhīravaḥ |
Gayāṃ yāsyati yaḥ putraḥ sa nas trātā bhavishyati ||

[7] *Likhita-saṃhitā*, verses 12-13 :
Gayāśire tu yat kiñchin nāmnā piṇḍaṃ tu nirvapet |

saṃhitā[1] and the Yājñavalkya-saṃhitā,[2] however, recognise Gayā or Gayākshetra alone as the place for such a funeral function, and the same holds good also in the case of the Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Canto 107.[3] It is interesting to observe that the Rāmāyaṇa and the Uśana-saṃhitā have sought to heighten the importance of Gayā as such a place by the citation of a versified saying of traditional fame,[4] which reads as follows :—

Eshṭavyā bahavaḥ putrā guṇavanto[5] bahuśrutāḥ | [6]
teshām vai[7] samavetānām api kaśchid Gayāṃ vrajet ||[8]

"A man should desire to have many sons (or descendants), gifted with qualities and learned in the hope that at least one of them may perchance go on pilgrimage to Gayā."

The common point in all these stray references is that in all of them the importance of Gayā or Gayākshetra has been extolled as a place for performing funeral obsequies and offering cakes of rice for the release of the departed

narakastho divaṃ yāti, svargastho moksham āpnuyāt ||
Ātmano vā parasyâpi Gayākshetre yatas tataḥ |
yan nāmnā pātayet piṇḍaṃ taṃ nayed Brahma-śāśvatam ||

1 *Vasiṣṭha-saṃhita*, Ch. 22 :
Nandanti pitaras tasya suvṛishṭair iva karshakāḥ |
yad Gayāstho dadātyannaṃ pitaras tena putriṇaḥ ||

2 *Yājñavalkya-saṃhitā*, Ch. I, verse 261 :
Yad dadāti Gayāsthaś cha sarvamānan tam uchyate |
tathā varshātrayodaśyāṃ Maghāsu cha na saṃśayaḥ ||

3 *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Canto 107, verses 11-13.

4 *Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, Canto 107, verse 11 :
Śrūyate dhimatā tāta śrutir gītā yaśasvinā |
Uśana-saṃhitā, Ch. 3, verse 130 :
Gāyanti gāthā te sarve kīrtayanti manīshiṇaḥ ||

5, 6, 7 *Uśana-saṃhitā*, Ch. 3, verse 131, reads *śīlavanto guṇānvitā* and *teshān tu*.

8 *Vishṇu-saṃhitā*, Ch. 85, verse 67, *Likhita-saṃhitā*, verse 11, give a different reading, which tallies rather with that in the Great Epic :
Eshṭavyā bahavaḥ putrā yadyapeko Gayāṃ vrajet |
yajeta vâśvamedhena nīlaṃ vā vṛisham utsṛijet ||

souls. In the Rāmāyaṇa alone, the high sanctity of Gayā has been accounted for by the great sacrifice performed by Gaya[1] who has been represented in the Gayā-māhātmya as "King Gaya" and in the Mahābhārata as "a royal sage (*rājarshi*)." These references are conspicuous by the absence of the legends of Gayâsura, Gadâsura and Dharmaśilâ of the later fable. Another common feature discernible in these references is that Gayā or Gayākshetra alluded to is undoubtedly limited to Brahma-Gayā by the express mention of such prominent objects as the Gayāśira or Gayā-śīrsha hill, the Akshaya-vaṭa, the Vishṇupada and the Phalgu-tīrtha, and by the omission of all objects signifying Bodh-Gayā. It is important to note that Gadādhara as the main deity of Gayā finds no mention save in the solitary verse of the Atri-saṃhitā which must be synchronous with or subsequent to the full iconic conception of Vishṇu as mace-bearer. In spite of the fact that the substitution of *deva-Gadādhara* for *Vishṇupada* signifies the development of the iconic stage, we cannot but connect the reference in the Atri-saṃhitā with those aforesaid for the simple reason that it has for its objective Brahma-Gayā and Brahma-Gayā alone, which it has represented by the Phalgutīrtha, Gadādhara, the iconic form of Vishṇu, and the Gayāśīrsha hill.[2] Lastly, from a comparative study of the various references we can clearly envisage a gradual process of centralisation of the place for funeral

[1] *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Canto 107, verse 11 :
Gayena yajamānena Gayeshveva pitṛin prati ||

[2] *Atri-saṃhitā*, verse 57 :
Phalgu-tīrthe naraḥ snātvā dṛishṭvā devaṃ Gadādharam |
Gayāśīrshaṃ padākramya muchyate Brahmahatyayā ||

function at Gayā from a good number of such other centres.[2]

The ground is now prepared to examine and evaluate the text of the earlier Eulogium as it is presented in the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, Chapters 84 and 95. It is needless to point out here that the aphorisms of Pāṇini and the Gṛihya-Sūtra of Aśvalāyana clearly presuppose the Vaiśampāyana recension of the Mahābhārata, whereas the one for our authority is the Sautī or Paurāṇikī version which ranges in date between the Maurya and the Gupta times, the lower limit being fixable by the Koh copper-plate at the 5th century of the Christian era. We are tempted to reproduce below the text both in original and in translation as we venture to think that long before the composition of the propagandist Gayā-māhātmya in the Purāṇas, there already had been in existence a Eulogium at once complete and far simpler in conception and composition. It may, however, be observed from the distribution of the version in two separate chapters of the Great Epic, that the earlier version of the Eulogium consisted of two sections designed to bring out two somewhat different aspects of the same theme.

[2] Prayāga which is placed in the *Śaṅkha-saṃhitā*, Ch. 14, verses 1-2, on a par with Gayākshetra and other places of sanctity recognised as centres for funeral function has been distinguished in the *Uśana-saṃhitā*, Ch. 3, verse 130 as the fitting place for death :

Gayāyām akshaya-śrāddhaṃ, Prayāge maraṇādishu |

SECTION I

a. TEXT

Mbh. Vanaparva, Ch. 84, Vs. 82-103 :

Tato Gayāṃ samāsādya brahmachārī samāhitaḥ |
aśvamedham avāpnoti kulañchaiva samuddharet || 82
Tatrâkshayavaṭo nāma trishu lokeshu viśrutaḥ |
tatra dattaṃ pitṛibhyas tu bhavatyakshayam uchyate || 83
Mahāradyām upaspṛiśya tarpayet pitṛidevatā |
akshayān prāpnuyāl lokān kulañchaiva samuddharet || 84
Tato Brahmasaraṃ gantvā Dharmâraṇyopa śobhitam |
Brahmalokam avāpnoti prabhātām eva śarvarīm || 85
Brahmaṇā tatra sarasi yūpa śresṭhaḥ samucchṛitaḥ |
Yūpam pradakshiṇaṃ kṛitvā vājapeyaṃ phalaṃ labhet || 86
Tato gachcheta rājendra Dhenukāṃ lokaviśrutam |
ekarātroshito rājan prayacchet Tila-dhenukām || 87
Sarvapāpaviśuddhâtmā Somalokaṃ vrajet dhruvam |
tatra cihṇaṃ mahad rājan adyâpi hi na saṃśayaḥ || 88
Kapiiā sahavatsā vai parvate vicharatyuta |
savatsāyā padānyasyā dṛiśyante' dyāpi Bhārata || 89
Teshūpaspṛiśya rājendra padeshu nṛipasattama |
Yat kiñchid aśubhaṃ karmaṃ tat praṇaśyati Bhārata || 90
Tato Gṛidhravaṭaṃ gachchet sthānaṃ devasya śūlinaḥ |
snāyīta bhasmanā tatra saṅgamya vṛishabha-dhvajam || 91
Brāhmaṇena bhavech chīrṇaṃ vrataṃ dvādaśavārshikam |
itareshān tu varṇānāṃ sarvapāpaṃ praṇaśyati || 92
Udyantañ cha tato gachchet parvataṃ Gītanāditam |
Sāvitryās tu padaṃ tatra dṛiśyate Bharatarshabha || 93
Tatra Sandhyām upāsīta brāhmaṇaḥ saṃśitavrataḥ |
tena hyupāstā bhavati sandhyā dvādaśavārshikī || 94

Yonidvārañ cha tatraiva viśrutaṃ Bharatarshabha |
tatrâbhigamya muchyeta purusho yoni-saṅkaṭāt || 95
Kṛishṇa-śuklāvubhau pakshau Gayāyāṃ yo vasen naraḥ |
punātyā saptamaṃ rājan kulam nāstyatra saṃśayaḥ || 96
Eshṭavyā bahavaḥ putrā yadyapeko Gayāṃ vrajet |
yajeta vâśvamedhena nīlaṃ vā vṛisham utsṛijet || 97
Tato Phalguṃ vrajet rājaṃs tīrthasevī narâdhipa |
aśvamedham avāpnoti siddhiñ cha mahatīm vrajet || 98
Tato gaccheta rājendra Dharmaprasthaṃ samāhitaḥ |
Tatra kūpodakam pītvā tataḥ snātaḥ śuchis tathā |
pitiṛin devāṃs tu santarpya muktapāpo divaṃ vrajet || 100
Mataṅgasyâśramas tatra maharsher bhāvitâtmanaḥ |
tam praviśyāśramaṃ śrīmach chhrama śoka-vināśanam || 101
Gavāmayanayajñasya phalam prāpnoti mānavaḥ |
Dharmaṃ tatrâbhisamspṛiśya vājimedham avāpnuyāt || 102
Tato gachcheta rājendra Brahmasthānam anuttamam |
tatrâbhigamya rājendra Brahmāṇam purusharshabha |
rājasūyâśvamedhābhyāṃ phalaṃ vindanti mānavāḥ || 103

b. TRANSLATION

82. The devout pilgrim as he reaches Gayā, pure in conduct and absorbed in thought, earns the merit of horse-sacrifice and emancipates the line of his forefathers.

83. There at the foot of the Undying Banyan of three-world-fame an offering to the departed paternal spirits means to him a harvest of imperishable kind.

84. At the bed of the Mahānadī he should offer oblations to the dead ancestors with its waters so as to ensure himself

the eternal kingdom of heaven and to rescue the line of his descent as well.

85. Next to repair to the tank Brahmasara beautified by the outskirting sylvan expanse of Dharmâraṇya in order to cherish the Brahmaloka as sure as the dawn of day follows the flight of night.

86. The great sacrificial post raised aloft by Brahmā (Brahma-yūpa) and standing by the same tank the pilgrim should go round about so that the result of *vājapeya* (horse-sacrifice) may be his.

87-88. Thereafter, O lord of kings! the devout one should walk to and stay a night at the renowned region of Dhenukā. Thence he should proceed to Tila-dhenukā where, O lord of kings! the prominent marks can undoubtedly be traced even to this day, and in consequence he inevitably enters the Somaloka with a mind purged of all sins.

89-90. The milch-cow Kapilā ranged the very hill with her calf and her hoofmarks along with her calf's may be discerned there, O king! even now. And a touch of these rocky impressions would, O the best of sovereigns! completely destroy effects of any human misdeed.

91-92. Then he must journey to the foot of Gṛidhravaṭa (the banyan tree marking approach to the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill), the holy site of the god Śiva, the holder of the trident. Then going near the figure of the Bull, he shall besmear it with ashes. In the case of Brahmins the result thereof is the merit of observing the sacrificial rite which lasts for twelve years; and in the case of other castes, it is the end of all sins.

93-94. The pilgrim then, O lord of kings! visits the hills Udyanta and Gītanādita where the site for the observance

of Sāvitrī can be seen. There the Brāhmin, given to religious rites, should invoke Sandhyā,—a highly meritorious act which bears the fruit of twelve years' similar practice elsewhere.

95. There is then the famed Yonidvāra (Brahmayoni, the Passage of the Womb). When a man passing through it succeeds in coming out, he escapes from the danger of rebirth.

96. The man who resides at Gayā during both the dark half and bright half of the lunar month ministers forsooth, O lord ! to the pleasure of the dead forefathers back to the seventh generation.

97. A person should desire to have many sons (or descendants) in the hope that at least one of them may perchance undertake pilgrimage to Gayā, or perform the horse-sacrifice, or set at liberty a bull of blue complexion.

98. Then, O lord of men, the pilgrim should wend his way to the Phalgu river to obtain the result of horse-sacrifice and to attain fulfilment of his objective.

99. Thereafter with all solemnity he should go to Dharmaprastha (the holy site of Dharma) where, O great king Yudhishṭhira, virtue ever reigns, and where he should drink the water of the well and bathe in the same and thereby get sanctified to offer oblations to the spirits of the forefathers. Freed from all sin, he then journeys into heaven.

101-102. There (at Dharmaprastha) stands the hermitage of the high-souled great sage Mataṅga. On entering into that hermitage, O graceful king ! men's fatigue and sorrow all come to an end, and they obtain the result of

cow-sacrifice. From a holy touch of Dharma (the Buddha-image) there accrues to them the benefit of horse-sacrifice.

103. The pilgrim should at last go, O lord of kings! to Brahmasthāna (the holy site of Brahmā) of unsurpassed fame, and thereby enjoy the fruit of Rājasūya and Aśvamedha sacrifices.

SECTION II

a. TEXT

Mbh. Vanaparva, Ch. 95, Vs. 9-29:

Rājarshiṇā puṇyakṛitā Gayenânupamadyute |
nago Gayaśiro yatra puṇyā chaiva Mahānadī[1] || 9
Vānīramālinī ramyā nadī-pulina-śobhitā |
divyam pavitrakūṭañ cha pavitraṃ dharaṇīdharam || 10
Ṛishijushṭaṃ supuṇyaṃ tat tīrtham Brahmasarottamam |
Agastyo bhagavān yatra gato Vaivasvatam prati || 11
Uvāsa cha svayaṃ tatra Dharmarājaḥ sanātanaḥ |
sarvāsāṃ saritāñ chaiva samudbhedo viśāmpate || 12
Yatra sannihito nityam mahādevaḥ pinākadhṛik |
tatra te Pāṇḍavā vīrāḥ chāturmāsyais tad ejire || 13
Ṛishiyajñena mahatā yatrâkshayavaṭo mahān |
Akshaye devayajane akshayaṃ yatra vai phalam || 14
Te tu tatropavāsāṃs tu chakrur niśchitamānasāḥ |
brāhmaṇās tatra śataśaḥ samājagmus tapodhanāḥ || 15
Chāturmāsyenâyajanta ārshena vidhinā tadā |
tatra vidyā-tapo-vṛiddhā brāhmaṇā Vedapāragāḥ |
Kathām prachakrire puṇyāṃ sadasisthā mahātmanām || 16

[1] Another reading is—*Phalgu nāmā mahānadī.*

Tatra vidyā-vrata-snātaḥ kaumāraṃ vratam āsthitaḥ |
Śamaṭho' kathayad rājan āmūrtarayasaṃ Gayam || 17
Amūrtarayasaḥ putro Gayo rājarshisattamaḥ |
puṇyāni yasya karmāṇi tāni me śṛiṇu Bhārata || 18
Yasya yajño babhūveha bahvanno bahu dakshiṇaḥ |
yatrânna-parvatā rājan śata śo' tha sahasra śaḥ || 19
Ghṛitakulyāś cha Dadhna ś cha nadyo bahuśatās tathā |
vyañjanānām pravāhāś cha mahārhānām sahasra śaḥ || 20
Ahanyahani chápyevaṃ yāchatāṃ sampradīyate |
anye cha brāhmaṇā rājan bhuñjate' nnaṃ susaṃskṛitam || 21
Tatra vai dakshiṇā-kāle Brahmaghosho divaṃ gataḥ |
nacha prajñāyate kiñchid Brahma śabdena Bhārata || 22
Puṇyena charatā rājan bhūddiśaḥ khaṃ nabhas tathā |
āpūrṇam āsīd śabdena tadâpyāsīt mahâdbhūtam || 23
Yatra sma gāthā gāyanti manushyā Bharatarshabha |
annapānaiḥ śubhais tṛiptvā deśe deśe suvarchasaḥ || 24
Gayasya yajñe ke tvadya prāṇino bhoktuṃ īpsavaḥ |
tatra bhojana-śishṭasya parvatāḥ pañchaviṃśatiḥ || 25
Na tat pūrve janāś chakrur na karishyanti châpare |
Gayo yad akarod yajñe rājarshir amitadyutiḥ || 26
Kathan tu devā havishā Gayena paritarpitāḥ |
punaḥ śakyantyupādātum anyair dattāni kānichit || 27
Sikatā vā yathā loke yathā vā divi-tārakāḥ |
yathā vā varshato dhārā asaṅkheyāḥ sma kenachit || 28
Tathā gaṇayituṃ śakyā Gaya-yajñena dakshiṇāḥ |
evaṃvidhāḥ subahavas tasya yajñā mahīpateḥ |
babhūvur asya sarasaḥ samīpe Kuru-nandana || 29

b. TRANSLATION

9. Gayā is a land sanctified by the royal sage Gaya of superb resplendence where stands the hill Gayaśira and flows as well the sacred and great river Phalgu.

10. This river is rich in beauty from its banks bedecked with the groves of canes and sandy beaches. And the hill is equally sacred and beautiful, representing a holy elevation of the earth.

11. The bathing tank called Brahmasara has acquired sanctity from the religious rites of the sages. There the divine sage Agastya waited upon Vaivasvata, and there also lived the eternal Dharmarāja or Lord of Justice.

12. The elevation which is the source of all the streams and in the vicinity of which Mahādeva, the holder of *piṇāka*, ever dwells on the spot where the valiant Pāṇḍavas moved about observing the Chāturmāsya rite (the ceremony lasting for four months).

13-14. Akshayavaṭa, the undying banyan tree, derives its greatness from the great sacrificial performances of the Ṛishis. The offering of worship to deities at its foot bears imperishable fruits. There they (the Pāṇḍavas) observed the holy fast with perfect composure of mind, and there thronged also one hundred Brāhmins, who revelled in the wealth of penances.

15. When the Chāturmāsya rite was being observed in accordance with the prescriptions of the sages, the Brahmins well-versed in the Vedas and advanced in learning and virtue gave currency to the sacred tradition of great men in the parliament assembled.

16. There Śamatha, accomplished in learning and devoted to celibacy, narrated, O king! the following story of Gaya, the son of Amūrtarayas.

17. Hearken, O lord! to what I say of the holy deeds done by Gaya, the best of royal sages, the son of Amūrtarayas.

18. It was here that he performed a sacrifice in course of which he freely distributed abundant food and liberality, and in consequence there arose hundreds and thousands of heaps of food.

19. The clarified butter and curd flowed in hundreds of streams and the streams of dainty curries counted by thousands.

20. People streamed in, day in day out, to ask for alms and were made fully satiated. The Brāhmins among the guests were served with highly pure dishes.

21. When the fees were being distributed to the Brāhmins, the shouts of victory uttered by them reached the sky, and everything else sank beneath the utterance of the holy words of the Veda.

22. When those acts of merit were being done, the earth, the quarters, the oceans and the sky resounded with that sound and there were some unusual happenings to signalise the event.

23. The people at large being sumptuously fed and entertained, went from country to country and sang in praise.

24 Who is there of the animal world desirous of enjoying a repast of the residues of food of which there are no fewer than twenty-five hills ?

25. No mortal either did or will do what the royal sage Gaya of unsurpassed glory actually performed at the time of this sacrifice.

26. How is it possible for others to gratify the gods with their offerings in the manner in which Gaya did with the oblations of ghee ?

27. Gaya's gifts in the sacrifice were simply countless as the stars in heaven and sands in the earth and the drops of rain during heavy showers.

28. O scion of the Kurus ! so numerous were the ceremonies of the sacrifice made by King Gaya in the vicinity of the tank (Brahmasara).

9. CHARACTERISATION OF THE EPIC VERSION

Read with reference to the context, the Great Epic version of the Eulogium places Gayā as a place of Hindu pilgrimage intermediate between Benares and Rājagṛiha, Benares, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kāśī and Rājagṛiha, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Magadha. The prominent natural features of Gayā proper are represented by the hill Gayaśira and the great river Phalgu. The Gayā-māhātmya in the Purāṇas clearly distinguishes between the Phalgu and the Mahānadī or Mohānā river. But as the Great Epic has it, the distinction is shrouded in obscurity. The topographical description in the Epic palpably shows that the whole region of the holy land extended from Dharmâraṇya, sacred to Dharmarāja or Yama, down to Dharmaprastha, sacred to Dharma or Buddha,

and Brahmasthāna, sacred to Brahmā. It may be safely concluded from this that Dharmaprastha and Brahmasthāna of the Epic signify no other tract than Dharmâraṇya of the Vāyu-Purāṇa, the Dharmâraṇya of the Epic being a totally different area, occupying, as it does ,the northernmost site of the present town where the two hills Preta śilā and Rāma-śilā are situated. It will be seen that the Epic account locates in Dharmaprastha, just as the Vāyu-Purāṇa does in Dharmâraṇya, the Buddha-image called Dharma and the hermitage of Mataṅga as well. The Epic makes no mention of Mataṅga-vāpī, of which so much is said in the Purāṇas, whereas it expressly recommends bathing in the waters of the wells alone (*kūpodaka*). As a matter of fact, the Epic refers to just one sacred tank, the Brahmasara, in the whole region of Gayā, and locates the same by Dharmâraṇya. The later Gayā-māhātmya, however, locates Brahmakuṇḍa at the base of Preta śilā, and consequently we have little difficulty in identifying the rocky region of Preta śilā with the Dharmâraṇya of the Epic. The Epic description of Brahmayūpa leaves no room for doubt that it was a sort of a post-like structure overlooking the Brahmasara, which the pilgrim was expected to circumambulate. The Uttara-mānasa and such other tanks, brought to our notice by the Purāṇas, have no place in the Epic, and we need not be surprised at that knowing perfectly well from the inscriptions that these were later excavations, the excavations of the Pāla period. It is interesting to note that the Epic version takes into account no other trees than these two: (1) the famous Akshayavaṭa, undying banyan, and (2) the

Gṛidhravaṭa, banyan marking the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill, sacred to Lord Śiva. We mean that the Epic does not refer at all to the Bo-tree Aśvattha. Further, the Epic gives the total of the Gayā hills as twenty-five (*parvatāḥ pañchaviṃśatiḥ*), and fancifully alludes to numerous streamlets like the Ghṛitakulyā and the Dadhikulyā. As regards the central region, besides the hill Gayaśira, the river Phalgu and other sacred sights noticed above, the Epic draws our attention to the figure of a bull (*vrishabhadhvaja*) installed near the phallic symbol of the god Śiva on the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill, to a new site known as Sāvitrīpada, and to another called Dhenukā where the pilgrim was to pay his worship to Tila-dhenukā, a curious basalt rock bearing the hoofmarks of grazing cows. Accordingly, the Dhenukā or Tiladhenukā of the Epic is no other than Gopracḥāra of the later Gayā-māhātmya and Goshpada of the current tradition. The Gayā proper, as known to the Epic, is essentially a place sacred to Yama-Dharmarāja, Brahmā and Śiva-śūlī. Vishṇu or Vaishṇavism has no place in it, either as a name or as an idea. It legitimately follows, therefore, that not to speak of the legends of Gadādhara, Gayāsura, Gadāsura and other later demoniac developments in the Purāṇas, even Vishṇupada or footprint of Vishṇu, the earliest installation of Vishṇu worship, is simply out of the question. With the singular exception of Brahmayūpa we find no allusion to any structural erection, nor can we meet with any iconic suggestion save the phallic symbol of Śiva and his sacred bull (*vṛishabhadhvaja*). In connection with Dharmaprastha, however, the Epic extols the merit of touching Dharma (*Dharmam abhisaṃspriśya*),

which would be meaningless if not interpreted as signifying an image of the Buddha. If this interpretation of Dharma gains ground, it will be important to mark that the Epic Eulogium is post-Kushāṇa, *i.e.*, posterior in date to the iconic representation of the Buddha. Our Epic authority has nothing whatever to say about the decay of the place and the miseries of the Brahmins of Gayā or the curse of Brahmā as alleged in the later Eulogium to have brought them about. On the contrary, the episode of the royal sage Gaya, son of Amūrtarayas[1] and of his famous sacrifice reads in the glowing letters of prosperity. Again, there is no fantastic attempt at deriving the name of the city of Gayā from King Gaya and the name of Gayākshetra from the Demon Gayâsura. The spelling of the name of the main hill is markedly *Gayaśira*, and not *Gayāśira*. Although the Gayā of the Epic is a holy land for the Hindu pilgrims to offer the cakes of rice to the departed ancestors, no great emphasis is yet laid on the importance of the particular ceremony and of the officiating priests neither.

10. GAYĀ IN THE SKANDA-PURĀṆA

The Skanda-Purāṇa presents a scanty account of a Gayā, built at Chamatkārapura in the holy land of Hāṭakeśvara within the kingdom of Ānarta in imitation of the original. It speaks in high praise of Vishṇupada, the footprint of

[1] Gaya, name of a Ṛishi (son of Plati), *Rig-Veda* X. 63 17, X. 69. 16, *Ait. Br.* V. 2. 12; (said to know charms) Atharva I. 14 4; descendant of Atri and author of RV. V. 92. 19; a *rājarshi*, *Mbh.* I, III, IV, IX, XIII, *Rāmāyaṇ* II: son of Āmūrtarayas, *Mbh.* III, VII, XII; of Āyus, *Mbh.* I. 360; of a Manu, *Harivaṃśa* 880, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* II; of Havidhāna, *Hariva.* 73; of Vitatha, *Hariva.* 1732; of Sudyumna, *Hariva.* 631; etc.

Vishṇu, enshrined on the west side of the city as well as of a Vishṇupadī-Gaṅgā, a sacred stream flowing to the west of that imitation Gayā.[1] The river is called Vishṇupadī for the simple reason that it washed the site of the holy footprint of Vishṇu. In addition, it alludes to a Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha hill on the east and to a mango tree, describing all of these as places for offering *piṇḍas*. The main interest of this Purāṇa account lies in the fact that it definitely connects the representation of Vishṇu's footprint with the Vedic astronomical allegory of *tripādavikrama* of Vishṇu.[2] It may be easily imagined that when Gayā came to enjoy high prominence in the religious thought and practice of the Hindu peoples, specially as a place of pilgrimage for offering oblations to the dead ancestors and the people of far distant regions like Ānarta found it difficult to undertake such an arduous journey and the offering of *piṇḍas* at Gayā came to be regarded as a foremost religious duty of a Hindu, the king of the land deemed it expedient to provide a convenient substitute for the holy place within easy reach.

11. GAYĀ IN THE BOOKS ON RITUAL

A number of Prayogas or Books on Gayā ritual were compiled in comparatively recent times as containing prescriptions for the guidance of the Hindu pilgrims at Gayā. Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's *Gayānushṭhāna-paddhati*[3] and Maṇi-

[1] *Skanda-Purāṇa, Nāgara-khaṇḍa*, Ch. XIX, verses 25-36.

[2] *Skanda-Purāṇa, Nāgara-khaṇḍa*, Ch. XXIV, verses 7-8 :
Valirvaddho yadā tena Vishṇunā Prabha-Vishṇunā |
tadā kramair tribhir vyāptaṃ trailokyaṃ sacharācharam ||
Hāṭakeśvaraje kshetre sannyastaḥ prathamāḥ kramaḥ !

[3] *Sanskrit MS.*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, III. D. 26.

rāma's *Gayāyātrā-prayoga*[1] may be taken as typical specimens of these ritualistic compositions, all of which are based upon the Gayā-eulogium in the Purāṇas. These works bear out nothing but the overwhelming importance of the funeral rites at Gayā in modern Hindu life. The interest of these works lies also in the fact that they have so interpreted the *śloka* of the Gayā-māhātmya relating to the pilgrim's function at Bodh-Gayā that the worship has been transferred from the Buddha to Vishṇu, the Bo-tree itself being represented as a living manifestation of the Hindu triad.[2]

12. GAYĀ IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

Gayā as known to the Buddhists is both a populous place (*gāma*) and a sanctorum (tittha),[3] and as such it corresponds to Gayāpurī (the city of Gayā) of the Gayā-māhātmya in the Vāyu-Purāṇa, that is to say, to the Gayā proper representing *antar*-Gayā, the innermost zone of Gayākshetra (the entire region of Gayā). Though in a political sense Gayā formed an integral part of the kingdom of Magadha (Magadha-raṭṭha),[4] from a religious (may be, also from a fiscal) point of view, however, Gayākshetra and Magadha-kshetra were two distinct regions or circles. The Ganges constituted the natural dividing line between the two king-

[1] *Sanskrit MS.*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, III. D. 27, folio 17-A.

[2] Bloch's *Note on Bodh-Gayā, Archæological Survey of India, Annual Report for* 1908-9, pp. 151-152.

[3] *Paramatthajotikā*, Vol. II, p. 301 : *Gayā ti gāmo pi titthaṃ pi vuchchati. tadubhayam pi idha vattati.* Cf. *Udāna-Commentary,* Siamese edition, p. 94. Buddhaghosha in his Sāraṭṭha-pakāsinī, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 353, takes Gayā to mean just the *Gayāgāma*.

[4] *Paramatthadīpanī, Therigāthā-Commentary*, p. 225 : *Magadharaṭṭhe Bodhimaṇḍa. Lalita-vistara* (Mitra's Ed.), Ch. XVII, p. 309 : *Māgadhakānaṃ Gayā.*

doms of Kāśī and Magadha, and Gayā has necessarily been located, precisely as in the Great Epic, between the holy city of Benares on the one hand and Magadhakshetra on the other. The Gorathagiri (Barābar group of hills[1]) which is now included in the Sadar subdivision of the Gayā district formed in the good old days of the Mahābhārata the western border-line of Magadhakshetra (the holy region of Magadha).[2] From a similarity of topographical descriptions the Pāsāṇaka-chetiya (Rocky-shrine) of Buddhist literature appears to have been identical either with the Gorathagiri itself[3] or some other hill near about. The entire holy region which is designated Gayākshetra in the later Gayā-māhātmya and in some of the Brahmanical works on Smṛiti is divided evidently in Buddhist literature into the three tracts of Gayā, Nadī and Uruvelā (Uruvilvā of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts). Of these, Gayā finds its name and identity in the present city of Gayā, while the names of Nadī and Uruvelā are at present confined respectively to two small villages, namely, Nadī situated in the north on the edge of an old channel of the river Son,[4] and Urel situated in the south, "situated at a distance of about half a mile to the south

[1] See *JBORS*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 162, for Jackson's identification of Gorathagiri or Goradhagiri mentioned in the Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela and in the Mahābhārata with the help of two short inscriptions.

[2] *Mahābhārata*, II, 19, 30 :

Goratham girim āsādya dadṛiśur Magadham puram.

The point is discussed also in Barua's *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, pp. 224 foll.

[3] *Paramatthajotikā*, Vol. II, p. 583: *Magadhakhette Pāsāṇaka-chetiyaṃ.* The point is discussed in Barua's *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, pp. 227-228.

[4] Grierson's *Notes on the District of Gayā*, p. 9: "Mr. Bourdillon, C. S. gives as an additional proof that the village Nadī, on the edge of one of these old channels, now some ten miles from the nearest point of the Son, is mentioned in some exceedingly old and curious documents of the Delhi-empire as *Nadī-ba-lab-i-daryā Son*, Nadī on the Sone brink."

of the temple at Bodh Gayā,"[2] the ancient name and identity of Urel being represented by Senānigāma[1] on the bank of the river Nerañjarā or Nairañjanā. If such were the geographical distribution of the three tracts, Nadī cannot but be the northern[2], Uruvelā the southern and Gayā the central in their respective positions, Nadī bordering an old channel of the Son; Uruvelā the Nilājan[3] and Gayā the Phalgu.

As a matter of fact, the division of the Gayā region into three tracts is but an inference from the names of three Kassapa brothers, Uruvela-Kassapa, Nadī-Kassapa and Gayā-Kassapa, famous as leaders of the Jaṭila ascetics. This inference regarding the three tracts and their geographical positions is amply supported by Buddhaghosha in his commentary on the Aṅguttara-Nikāya where we read that Uruvela-Kassapa came to be known as such from his turning an ascetic at Uruvelā,[4] that Nadī-Kassapa derived his distinctive designation from his turning an ascetic at a place near the bend of a Mahāgaṅgā or Great river,[5] and that Gayā-Kassapa similarly owed his appellation to his turning an ascetic on the Gayāsīrsha hill.[6] Barring the

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Vol. 1, p. 166: *Yena Uruvelā Senānigāma* Cf. *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 21.

[2] Hwen Thsang locates the tract of Nadī to the south of Gayā, and the same location is suggested also in the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*.

[3] Cf. *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p, 1: *Uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā Nerañjarāya tīre.* See *passim* for other references.

[4] *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 324: *Uruvelaṃ gantvā isi-pabbajjaṃ pabbajjitvā Uruvela-Kassapo nāma jāto.*

[5] *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 324: *Mahāgaṅgānadīvaṅke pabbajito Nadī-Kassapo nāma jāto.* But Dharmapāla in his *Theragāthā*-Commentary (See *Psalms of the Brethren* by Mrs. Rhys Davids, p. 196), says that Nadī-Kassapa entered on a hermit's life on the banks of the river Nerañjarā.

[6] *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 324: *Gayāsīse pabbajito Gayā-Kassapo nāma jāto.*

fact that Nadī was at the time of Buddha's enlightenment an important centre of Jaṭila activity, one will look in vain for geographical details in Buddhist literature.

Concerning Gayā our first information is that it was a great centre of the activities of the Jaṭilas with Gayā-Kāśyapa at their head. The Gayāśīrsha hill formed then, as now, the chief landmark of Gayā proper, and, as we have in some of the Buddhist works, lent its name as well to the adjoining locality. The Pāli scholiasts have sought to account for the nomenclature of this hill by the resemblance of its top to the shape of an elephant's head.[1] From this it follows that in their opinion the correct spelling of the name would be Gayasīrsha or Gayaśira which is a phonetical equivalent of the word *gajaśīrsha* or *gajaśira*.[2] The truth of this suggestion is partly borne out by the spelling Gayaśira met with in the Mahābhārata and Yāska's Nirukta. In Buddhist literature there is no attempt to derive the name of the city of Gayā from King Gaya and that of the entire Gayā region from Gayâsura. The explanation offered is as simple as it is natural. Whether we accept it or not, it is certain that the hill presents the appearance of a sitting elephant. The same also holds good in the case of the boulder on the top of the Preta śilā hill. And curiously enough, the centre from which the Pañchakrośī Gayā is now-a-days measured is a figure of an elephant in the precincts of the Vishṇupada

[1] *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part III, p. 7: *Gayāsīsanānako katthikumbhasadiso piṭṭhipāsāṇo.* *Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., p. 94: *Gayāsīse'ti gajasīsasadisa-sikharo tattha eko pabbato Gayāsīsanāmako.*

[2] As for the change of *j* into *y*, cf. *nija=niya* (Karaṇīyā-Metta-Sutta, Sutta-Nipāta).

temple. Gayā proper had then already been renowned as a place of pilgrimage where bathing in the Gayā tank (*Gayā-pokkharaṇi*) and the Gayā river (*Gayā-nadī*) was believed to have been of special merit as a means of washing away sins and impurities. Of all the rivers where people bathed to get rid of their sins and impurities, the Gayā stands out in an old Pāli couplet as the chief.[1] And whatever be the merit of Buddhaghosha's explanation of the word *Phaggu* occurring in this couplet, there is a clear hint at the identity of the Gayā river with the Phalgu.[2] The Pāli commentaries locate the Gayā tank (which Buddhaghosha calls Maṇḍala-vāpi[3]) not far from the populous part of Gayā, which is to say, in the vicinity of and near the approach to Gayā proper.[4] From this location it is evident that the Gayā tank of Buddhist literature is no other than the Brahmasara of the Mahābhārata. There is another very striking point of agreement between the two accounts.

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Vol. I, *Vatthūpama-Sutta*. The seven rivers mentioned therein are Bāhukā, Adhikakkā, Gayā, Sundarikā, Sarassatī, Payāga and Bāhumatī. Of these, the Bāhukā is the same river as the Bāhudā of the Mahābhārata, III. 84. 67. The identity of the Adhikakkā and the Bāhumatī is yet to be established. The Gayā is no other than the Phalgu, although Buddhaghosha would take it rather to signify the tank called Maṇḍalavāpi. The Sundarikā is a river in Kosala. The Payāga must be taken to mean the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna. As for the Sarassatī, cf. Mbh, III, 84. 64: *Sarasvatīṃ samāsādya tarpayet pitṛidevatāḥ*. The special sanctity enjoyed by the Gayātittha may be traced in the emph sis laid on it in the expression *Kiṃ kāhasi Gayaṃ gantrā?* Buddhaghosha in his *Papañcha-Sūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 147, accounts for this emphasis by the acknowledged superiority of Gayā to others in point of sanctity (*Yasmā cha loke Gayā sammattarā*).

[2] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, *Vatthūpama-Sutta*: *Suddhassa ve sadā Phaggu*. Cf. *Thera-gāthā*, verses 287, 345; *Gayāyaṃ Gayā-Phagguyā*.

[3] *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 145. The reading in the Siamese edition is *Maṇḍala-vāpi*. Cf. *Sārattha-pakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part III, p. 7, where the tank is referred to simply as a *pokkharaṇī*.

[4] *Paramatthajotikā*, Vol. II, p. 301: *tassa gāmassa samīpe avidūre dvārasantike.*

We have seen that the Mahābhārata alludes to a post or tower-like erection called Brahmayūpa overlooking the tank Brahmasara. Happily we get in the Buddhist works an earlier and more definite account of this erection on the bank of the Gayā tank, and curiously enough, the erection has been represented only as a Yaksha abode or Yaksha temple[1] in the shape of a raised platform standing like a watch-tower (*ṭaṃ-kita-mañcha*).[2] The commentaries explain the word *ṭaṃ-kita-mañcha* as signifying a stone-edifice built by rivetting a flat block to four high walls forming a hollow quadrangle.[3] The inside of this antique tower was believed to have been the abode of a *yakkha* (demon) named Sūchiloma (the Needle-haired),[4] while the outside served as a haunt of another *yakkha* known by the name of Khara (the Brick-scaled or Rough-skinned).[5] It may be easily imagined that when Brahmanism got a foothold at Gayā ,it missed no opportunity of giving the Gayā tank the dignified name of Brahmasara and christening as Brahmayūpa the lithic structure with an aboriginal halo about it.

The Pāli scholiasts suggest a curious explanation of the name Phaggu (Skt. Phalgu) as applied to the main river of

[1], [2] *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, Part I, *Yakkha-Saṃyutta*, 3; *Sutta-Nipāta*, *Sūchīloma-Sutta* : *Ṭaṃkītamañche Sūchīloma-Yakkhassa bhavane.* But cf. *Udāna*, p. 4 : *Ajakalāpaka-chetiye Ajakalāpakassa yakkhassa bhavane.*

[3] *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 353 : *Ṭaṃkītamañche'ti dīghamañchapāde majjhe vijjhitvā aṭṭaniyā pavesetvā katamañche, tassa idaṃ upari idaṃ heṭṭhā ti n'atthi. Taṃ devaṭṭhāne ṭhapenti chatunnaṃ pāsāṇānāṃ upari pāsāṇaṃ attharitvā katageham pi Ṭaṃkītamañcho'ti vuchchati. Paramatthajotikā*, Vol. II, p. 301 : *chatunnaṃ pāsāṇānaṃ upari vitthataṃ pāsāṇaṃ āropetvā kato pāsāṇamañcho.*

[4] *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 353 : *yassa sakala-sarīraṃ kaṭhina-sūchīhi gavachchitaṃ viya. Paramattha-jotikā*, II, p. 302 : *Sūchilomattā Sūchilomo yakkho.* See also Barua and Sinha's *Barhut Inscriptions*, No. 177.

[5] Barua and Sinha's *Barhut Inscriptions*, No. 177.

Gayā. The master commentator Buddhaghosha would have us believe that the word *Phaggu* is just a shortening of *Phagguṇa-nakkhatta*[1] (*Phālguni-nakshatra*), the asterism called Phagguṇa or Phaggunī which is prominent in the month bearing its name, we mean the month of Phālguna corresponding to March-April of the English calendar.[2] The orientation of Buddhaghosha's explanation can be supplied from the Udāna and its commentary, and no less from the commentary on the Sutta-Nipāta. According to the Udāna text, there was to be found every year in the first eight days at the termination of the autumn and winter seasons a large concourse of matted-hair ascetics (the Jaṭilas) at Gayā during the life-time of the Buddha.[3] Dharmapāla in his commentary on the Udāna, specifies the time as being the termination of the winter with the close of the month of Māgha (Feb.-March) and ranging over the first eight days of the following month of Phālguna when dew does not disappear at the advent of the spring season.[4] The information supplied in the Sutta-Nipāta commentary deepens the impression created by the Udāna text and commentary about the importance of Gayā at this particular season. Instead of describing the large concourse as an exclusive assemblage of the matted-hair ascetics, the Sutta-Nipāta commentary gives us to learn that it embraced

[1] *Papañcha-sūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 246 : *Phaggūti Phagguṇa-nakkhattam eva.* For justification of Buddhaghosha's explanation, cf. *Theragāthā*, verses 287, 345 : *Gayāyaṃ Gayā-phagguyā.*

[2] *Papañcha-Sūdani*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 256 : *Uttaraphagguṇa-divase.*

[3] *Udāna*, p. 6. So also at Uruvelā, see *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, I. 20. 15, p. 31.

[4] *Udāna-Commentary*, p. 95 : *Hemantassa utuno abbhantarabhūte Māghamāsassa avasāne chattāro Phagguṇamāsassa ādimhi aṭṭhadivasa-parimāṇe himapātanakāle.*

multitudes of pilgrims hailing from different directions of the country and thronging to render the sacred site a positive nuisance with their spittings and similar other filthy excretions.[1]

Thus it may be proved that Gayā as a place of pilgrimage had then already been as widely renowned as it is to-day. Once we admit this, the suggestion of Prof. Haraprasad Sastri that Gayā was even five or six centuries back a Hindu holy place of relatively small importance loses much, if not all, of its force.

Of the three distinctive features given by Buddhaghosha to Gayā, *viz.*, the Gayā tank, the Gayā river and the Gayā-śīrsha hill,[2] we have so far dealt at some length with the first two. Now concerning the Gayāśīrsha hill, we have already noticed that it formed the chief landmark of and lent its name to the adjoining locality of Gayā. We have also noted that it derived its name from the likeness of its summit to the shape of an elephant's crown, *Gayasisa* or *Gajasīsa*. There is no clear indication in Buddhist literature of the direction in which the hill stood in relation to the locality. "Not-far-from the locality of Gayā (*Gayāgāmassa avidūre*)," as suggested in the Buddhist works, is guilty of vagueness. A right reading of the Buddhist texts leads us, however, to understand that an onlooker from the top of

[1] *Paramatthajotikā*, II, p. 301 : *nānādisāto sannipatitānaṃ janassa khela-siṃghāṇikādi-nānāppakārāsuchinissanda-kilinna-bhūmibhāgaṃ pi taṃ titthappadesaṃ.* The *Theragāthā-Commentary* records (See *Psalms of the Brethren* by Mrs. Rhys Davids, p. 181) : "At that time the people held a festival every year in the former half of March (Phagguṇa), and a baptizing at the bathing stage (*titthābhiseka*), the festival being called the Gayā-Lent (*Gayā-Phaggu*)."

[2] *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part III, p. 7 : *Gayā'ti ekā pokkharaṇī-pi, atthi nadīpi, Gayāsīsanāmako hatthikumbhasadiso piṭṭhipāsāṇo.*

this hill could have a sight of the people bathing in the Gayā river, which is to say that the hill stood somehow overlooking the river.[1] Again, the Pāli scholiasts record that there was to be seen on the top of this hill a large block of stone affording seats for a thousand persons.[2]

Here it is important to observe that Buddhist literature is far from representing the Gayā proper as a special place for offering *piṇḍa* for the release of the dead forefathers from the spirit life; nor does it accord any prominence to the Gayāśīrsha hill as a sanctorum for the same purpose. All importance, on the other hand, attaches to the tank and the river, the waters of which were believed to have been of immense purifying efficacy.[3] It is for the solitary purpose of performing ablutions in the holy waters of the tank and the river that people at large, be they ascetics or householders, thronged there annually from all quarters during last four days of Māgha and first four days of Phālguna. With regard to the matted-hair ascetics who permanently dwelt there, we read, however, that they used to perform ceremonial ablutions even in the ice-cold nights of autumn and winter. A passage in the Udāna mentions the different modes in which these ascetics performed the ablutions, while its commentary observes that there existed amongst

1 *Udāna*, p. 6: *Bhagavā Gayāyaṃ viharati Gayāsīse. Tena kho pana samayena sambahulā Jaṭilā......Gayāyaṃ ummujjanti* etc.

2 *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Siamese Ed., Part III, p. 7: *hatthikumbhasadiso* piṭṭhipāsāṇo *yattha bhikkhusahassassa okāso pahoti. Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., pp. 94-95: *Yattha hatthikumbhasadise piṭṭhipāsāṇe bhikkhusahassassa okāso hoti.*

3 *Udāna-Commentary, Siamese* Ed., p. 94: *Gayātitthanti hi Gayāgāmassa avidūre ekā pokkharaṇī atthi nadīpi tad ubhayaṃ pāpa-pavāhana-titthanti lokiya-mahājana samudācharati.*

them a sharp divergence of opinions as to the relative efficacy of these modes. The modes in the text comprise (1) *ummujjana*, the emerging (2) *nimujjana* the plunging, (3) *ummujja-nimujjana* the repeated diving, and (4) *osiñchana* the anointing.[1]

The commentary adds that those in whose opinion the *ummujjana* mode was the most efficacious would emerge from water after having just a plunge; those to whom the *nimujjana* mode appealed most would plunge into water never to emerge; those who believed in the efficacy of the *ummujja-nimujjana* mode would have recourse to it by repeated plunging; while others who were advocates of the *osiñchana* mode would practise it by sprinkling their heads and bodies with waters either standing in the river or doing the same on the bank with the waters carried in a jug.[2]

The Udāna-commentary further adds that amongst these ascetics as well as other orders of Brahmins believing

1 *Udāna*, p. 6: *sambahulā Jaṭilā sītāsu hemantikāsu rattisu antaraṭṭhake himapātasamaye Gayāyaṃ ummujjanti pi nimujjanti pi ummujja-nimujjam pi karonti osiñchanti pi.* Cf. *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 31.

2 *Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., p. 95: *Tattha hi kechi ekummujjanen'eva pāpasuddhi hotīti ummujjanam eva katvā gachchhanti. Ummujjanaṃ pana nimmujjantare n'atthī ti avinābhāvato nimmujjanam pi te karonti yeva. Ye pana tasniṃ titthe nimmujjanen 'eva pāpasuddhi hotī ti evaṃdiṭṭhi kā te tattha nimmujjitvā assāse sannirumbhitvā maruppatitā vlya tath 'eva jiritakkhayaṃ pāpuṇanti. Apare punappuna....ummujjana-nimmujjanāni karonti. Kechi Gayāya udakaṃ hatthena gahetvā attano sīse cha sarīre cha osiñchanti, apare ghaṭehi udakaṃ gahetvā tīre ṭhatvā tathā karonti.* Buddhaghosha in his *Papañcha-sūdanī* Siamese Ed., Part 1, p. 245, says that those who lived in close proximity would bathe thrice daily, those farther and farther off would do the same some twice a day, some once, some every alternate day, and so on to once at year end. Those who proved unable to go personally would have the water brought them in jugs. In the Theragāthā, Gayā-Kassapa is represented as saying (*Psalms of the Brethren*, p.197): "At morn, at midday, at tho eventide Thrice in the day I gat me at Gayā Down in the water at Gayā's spring-feast."

in the efficacy of water-ablutions,[1] some could be seen remaining in wet cloth, some offering waters with the palms of their hands, some doing homage while in the water alternately to the sun and the moon, some repeating the Sāvitrī and other Vedic incantations thousands of times, some invoking Indra, the vanquisher of Vṛitra, entreating him to come down, and others propitiating the Mother Earth. In doing all these, some of them were to be seen getting down into the river, some getting up, some doing the preliminary washing, some shivering in cold while in water, and others undergoing similar hardships and making unusual gestures.[2]

That the chief importance of Gayā proper lay still in the purificatory effect of bathing in its holy waters is a conclusion, which is equally well borne out by the criticisms offered in Buddhist literature in connexion with the Jaṭilas. It will suffice here to quote below just two of these criticisms, one from the Vatthûpama Sutta of the majjhima-Nikāya and the other from the Udāna,—the criticisms offered with a view to holding before our eyes the superiority of moral virtue and developing the inwardness of ostentatious ceremonies :—

[1] The commentary distinctly suggests that the Jaṭilas alone find mention in the text solely owing to their position of predominance, while, as a matter of fact, other orders of Brahmins, some with shaven head and some with their characteristic tuft of hair, did observe the same practice at this part of the year. The comment reads : *Jaṭilā'ti pana Jaṭilānaṃ yebhuyyatāya vuttaṃ ; Muṇḍa-Sikhaṇḍino pi cha brāhmaṇā udaka-suddhikā tasmiṃ kāle tattha tathā karonti*

[2] *Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., pp 96-97 : *Tesu hi kechi udakavāsaṃ vasanti, kechi udakañjaliṃ denti, kechi tasmiṃ udake ṭhatvā chandima-suriye anuparivattanti kechi aneka-sahassavāraṃ Sāvitti-ādike japanti, kechi "Inda āgachchhathā" ti ādinā Vichchojasaṃ avhāyanti, kechi Mahatupaṭṭhānaṃ karonti. Evañ cha karontā kechi otaranti, kechi uttaranti, kechi anto-udake ṭhitā sīta-taddhitā danta-vīṇaṃ vādentīti evam ādikā nānappakāra-kiriyā dassenti.*

(1) The criticism in the couplet of the Vatthûpama-Sutta reads—

Suddhassa ve sadā Phaggu, suddhassôposatho sadā |
suddhassa suchikammassa sadā sampajjate vataṃ ||
Idh' eva siṇāhi brāhmaṇa, sabbabhūtesu karohi khemataṃ |
sache musā na bhaṇasi sache pāṇaṃ na hiṃsasi ||
Sache adinnaṃ nâdiyasi saddahāno amachchhari |
kiṃ kāhasi Gayaṃ gantvā, udapāno 'pi te Gayā ||

"The Phalgu gains always in significance from acts of the pure, and the religious fast, too, prospers in terms of the same.
The holy rites as well always prove of real moment in the light of pure deeds.
Bathe here, O Brāhmaṇa! vouchsafing security to all living beings. Indulgest thou not in lying speech, meanest thou not harm to a living creature, dost thou not appropriate what is not thine own, abidest thou in good faith, free from all motives of malignity, 't is no use your going a pilgrimage to Gayā: verily a well is equal to Gayā in importance for thee."

(2) And the criticism in the Udāna is set forth in the following solemn utterance of the Buddha—

Na udakena suchi hoti bahvettha nhāyati jano |
yamhi sachchañ cha dhammo cha, so suchi, so cha brāhmaṇo||

"Purification cometh not by water though the people bathe ever so long;
In whom truth and religion abide that man is pure, he is a Brāhmaṇa."[1]

The same inference may be safely drawn from a pointed

[1] *Udāna*, translated by D. M. Strong, pp. 8-9.

but general criticism of the Brahmanical belief in purification by waters (*udaka-suddhi*) that finds expression in the psalm of the Buddhist nun Puṇṇā. We quote below the relevant portion of this criticism :

Ko nu te idaṃ abbhāsi ajānantassa ajānako |
udakâbhisechanā nāma pāpakasmā pamuchchati ||
Suggaṃ nuna gamissanti sabbe maṇḍūka-kachchhapā |
nāgā cha suṃsumārā cha ye ch'aññe udakecharā ||
Orabbhikā sūkarikā machchhikā migavadhikā |
chorā cha vajjhaghātakā cha ye ch'aññe pāpakammino ||
Udakâbhisechanā te'pi pāpakammā pamuchchare ||
Sache imā nadiyo te pāpaṃ pubbekataṃ vaheyyuṃ |
puññaṃ p'imā vaheyyun te tena tvaṃ paribāhiro ||

"Who has told you, O ignorant one ! that mere ablution in water guarantees exteruation from sin born of evil deeds? For then verily, the frogs, tortoises, serpents, crocodiles and other aquatic animals would all be assured the kingdom of heaven. Butchers of sheep and killers of swine, catchers of fish and hunters of game, would enjoy, along with thieves and murderers, immunity from the effects of their evil deeds by the very sprinkling of water. Well, if such splashing would wash away sin, it will equally sweep away the merit for which you hie here, O Brahman, to bathe, overcome as you are with the dread of sin."

We have hitherto sought to shew how Gayā rose into prominence as a place of pilgrimage by reason of the widely current popular belief in the high purificatory efficacy of bathing in the waters of its river and tank. Now, we may proceed to show in the light of Buddhist literature that there was another momentous phenomenon which went to heighten

the glory not only of the Gayā proper but also of the entire region of Gayā. The marvellous fact was the plantation of colonies in all the three tracts of Gayā, Nadī and Uruvelā by an old order of ascetics, the *purāṇa*-Jaṭilas, with the three renowned Kassapa brothers as their heads and leaders (*nāyakā, vināyakā, aggā, pamukhā, pāmokkhā*). The Vinaya Mahāvagga which is our oldest canonical authority on the subject enlightens us as to the numerical strength of the followers of each of the three accredited leaders. Gayā-Kassapa commanded a following of two hundred Jaṭilas, Nadī of three hundred, and Uruvela of five.[1] A right appreciation of the point at issue will require a correct and intelligent study of the origin and historical position of this ascetic order.

The Jaṭilas represented an order of *tāpasas* outwardly distinguished by their matted hair.[1] Although they did not live the family life of the hermits and formed distinct bands or groups of ascetics like the Parivrājakas and the Recluses under some acknowledged leaders, their modes of life and religious practices go to show that they were ascetics with all the puritanic predilections of the hermits. For they lived in hermitages (*assamas*), made altars,[1] kept fire ablaze, performed sacrifices and ceremonial ablutions in sacred waters, would have themselves done to death by diving, worshipped the sun and the moon invoked Indra, the vanquisher of Vṛitra, chanted the Sāvitrī and such other hymns of the Veda and tried to appease the Mother Earth.

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 24.

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 33: *kesamissa jaṭāmissa. Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., p. 95: *Jaṭilā ti tāpasā, te hi jaṭā-dhāritāya Jaṭilā'ti vuttā.*

They counted Śakra and Brahmā amongst the supreme deities, and were great believers in miracles and supernormal powers. These leave no shadow of doubt that they were a class of orthodox Vedic ascetics. The epithet *purāṇa* attaching to their designation may be taken to signify that they enjoyed the prestige of being an ancient order of priestly ascetics, all of them belonging to the fold of the Brahmins. The key to the understanding of the origin of this peculiar order of Indian ascetics may be found in the story of the hermit Śarabhaṅga in the Śarabhaṅga-Jātaka (Fausböll, No. 522).

The Jātaka narrates that Śarabhaṅga, the commander-in-chief of Kāśī, retired from the worldly life to live as a hermit in an ideal home in the forest. His hermitage was built in the Kaviṭṭha forest on the banks of the Godāvarī. He had for dress nothing more than a dyed bark serving as coverings for his loin and body and a deer-skin as a skirt over his shoulder. He had his hair matted in a coil. He lived only on the roots and berries gleaned from the forest He practised the mystical *Yoga* with a view to developing the eight Attainments and the five supernormal faculties. Thus did he glorify the forest with the beauty of his asceticism. The wide-spread fame of the hermit drew around him too mighty a following to permit of a comfortable accommodation in his hermitage. Unable to make room for the multitude of ascetics, he sought relief by asking most of his chief pupils to shift to other suitable places, each with a company of the ascetics who gathered round him, one of them being ordered to dwell near the town of Lambachūḍaka in the kingdom of Chaṇḍapradyota, another

to take up his abode on the borders of the river Sātodikā in the kingdom of Surāshṭra, the third to build his hermitage in a great forest on the Añjana mountain, and so on and so forth. And it is superfluous to add that the self-same sage Śarabhaṅga has been mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa as a distinguished contemporary of Rāma, the hero of the Epic and no less as a venerable hermit who committed religious suicide by entering into the fire of sacrifice and attained resurrection thereby in the resplendent form of eternal youth.

The interest of the story centres round the point that the development of a new mode of a band of ascetics leading some sort of a corporate existence under a common leader, guide or superior is due more to accident of circumstances than to any well-planned scheme of life that may be discerned in the organization of the Buddhist holy order. In the light of this it becomes palpable that the Jaṭilas of the Gayā region owed their origin to some such process brought about by chance and came to form a distinct order of matted-hair ascetics retaining the main characteristics of Vedic Ṛishis.[1] In commenting on the Udāna statement *aggiṃ juhanti*, the scholiast clearly points out that some of the Jaṭilas of Gayā proper used to raise altars on the bank of the Gayā river and perform the fire-sacrifice with *darbha* grass, incense and similar other things. The performance of fire-sacrifice was resorted to by these ascetics as a distinct and, perhaps, the primary means of purification. It is easy to infer from the Buddhist records that in the hermitage

[1] With regard to Uruvela-Kassapa, Buddhaghosha in his *Manoratha-pūraṇi*, Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 324, says: *Isi-pabbajjaṃ pabbajitvā Uruvela-Kassapo nāma jāto.*

proper the *agnihotra* formed the principal function. We have already seen that the later Gayā-māhātmya singles out the Bhasmakūṭa hill as the main site of such an observance. It may now be noted that the current belief does not hesitate to identify the huge boulder set in the ground on the southern slope of the Bhasmakūṭa hill with the central spot of ever-blazing fire,—the basalt boulder described as Tiladhenukā in the Great Epic and Goprachāra in the later Eulogium.

Now turning to the tract of Uruvelā, we have first of all to note that the Pāli spelling of the name differs to some extent from Uruvilvā, a form met with in the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu, and this divergence in spelling has occasioned different speculations about the real significance of the name. The earlier speculation regarding the spellnig Uruvelā is that of Buddhaghosha in his immortal commentaries, and also the one which finds expression in the writings of Dharmapāla. According to both these great Pāli scholiasts, the name Uruvelā signifies either a great expanse of sandy banks or a sandy tract formed by deposits of sediments due to the overflooding of the stream. Both of them quote in their support a fantastic legend of ten thousand hermits resident therein who rendered their dwelling place a great heap of sand by the gradual accumulation of handfuls of sand brought individually as an atonement for their sinning heart. The legend attests that long before the advent of the Buddha the tract of the sandy

[1] *Papañcha-sūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 232, and *Udāna-Commentary*, Siamese Ed., p. 32 ; *Uruvelā'ti mahāvelā mahāvālikārāsīti attho, athavā urūti vālikā vuchchati, velā'ti mariyādā, velâtikkama-hetu āhaṭā uru Uruvelā'ti evam ettha attho daṭṭhabbo.*

heap had already been an accomplished fact and the people of after ages (*pachchhima-janatā*) had exalted it into a place of worship bounded by an enclosure (*parikkhipitvā chetiyaṭṭhānam akāsi*).

Dr. Bloch has, on the other hand, attempted to justify the other spelling Uruvilvā in Sanskrit Buddhist works by suggesting that the place derived its name from a large (*uru*) *bel* or *vilva* tree (*Aegle marmelos*) which marked it out, the present village of Urẹl, too, being distinguished by a *bel* tree standing in front thereof.[1]

Dr. Bloch's suggestion might have been welcome only as a plausible explanation if the form were Uruvilva, and not the feminine Uruvilvā occurring in the Lalitavistara[2] and the Mahāvastu.[3] The Pāli works, too, earlier or later, all use the name in the feminine, as Uruvelā, which, to be sure, does not yield any sense of a tree. The modern village of Urel preserving the relic of the ancient name Uruvelā may be signified by a *bel* tree. Even conceding that when with the progress of time the name Uruvelā came to be restricted to a single hamlet, a *bel* tree may have stood there as a distinctive mark. But when in the days of the Buddha, or even in times earlier, Uruvelā comprised a group of hamlets and certainly not any particular one, it would be idle to suggest a *bel* tree sufficing to lend its name to the whole group. And it may be aptly pointed out that trees indeed there were, the lordly banyan among others, but regrettably Dr. Bloch's *bel* tree has no place in any of the

[1] *Archæological Survey of India*, Annual Report, 1908-9, p. 144, f. n. 1. Cf. also Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 2.

[2] *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 226.

[3] *Mahāvastu*, Senart's Ed., Vol. II, p. 123.

[4] *Passim*.

vivid descriptions of Uruvelā-Uruvilvā or of the Senānigāma met with in all branches of Buddhist literature. Considering all the points for and against, the explanation offered by the Pāli annotators would seem to stand more to reason.

Let us now enquire how Uruvelā originally denoted a cluster of hamlets and not any particular rural unit, although Senānigāma or Senāpatigrāma stands out in all Buddhist literary traditions as the main hamlet associated with it. Our point is that Senānigāma (modern Urel) was not then co-extensive with the whole of the tract of Uruvelā, and the point will be increasingly clear in the light of the following discussion.

Taking the Gayāsīrsha hill to mark the southern boundary of Gayā proper, we can say that the tract of Uruvelā stretched south of this hill. The distance between the Bo-tree at Uruvelā and this hill is said to have been three *gāvutas*[1] corresponding to about six or seven miles, while the distance between the site of the Bo-tree and Benares covered eighteen *yojanas*[2] corresponding, more or less, to one hundred and fifty English miles.

There is no reason for confounding the Nerañjarā or Nairañjanā with the Gayā or Phalgu river.[2] For the Pāli canonical texts keep the two rivers quite distinct from each other. The Udāna text, for instance, expressly mentions that the Jaṭilas of Gayā proper would be seen bathing in the Gayā or Phalgu river,[3] whereas the Vinaya-Mahāvagga

[1] *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II. pp. 253-254: *Bodhimaṇḍato hi Gayā tiṇi gāvutāni, Bārāṇasī aṭṭhārasa-yojanāni.*

[2] "According to Bohtlingk and Roth's Dictionary, the river Nerañjarā itself was known as the Phalgu. Dr. Neumann says (Majjhima-Nikāya translation, I, p. 271) the town of Gayā is itself so called."

[3] *Udāna*, p. 6.

represents the Jaṭilas of Uruvelā as doing the same but in a different river, the Nerañjarā.[1] In the wide range of Buddhist literature, as a matter of fact, Uruvelā is found invariably associated with the river Nerañjarā or Nairañjanā (modern Nilājan or Lilājan).[2] From this it may be easily deduced that the tract of Uruvelā was mainly washed by the Nerañjarā, and not by the Phalgu. The Vinaya-Mahāvagga plainly indicates a northward course of the Nerañjarā so that any thing swept away by the current of the stream might be clearly visible to the people at Nadī[3] and at Gayā proper in its onward flow. We may gather from this that the Phalgu and the stream further north were somehow just the continuation of the Nerañjarā. It is interesting to observe that the Nairañjanā has been described in the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu as a river graced occasionally by the bathing beauties of the Nāgas.[4]

The principal locality in Uruvelā of the Buddha's time was Senā-nigama or Senāni-gāma,[5] corresponding to the Senāpatigrāma of the Sanskrit Buddhist works.[6] In commenting on the name of this locality, Buddhaghosha points

1 *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, p. 31 : *Tena kho pana samayena te Jaṭilā sītāsu hemantikāsu rattisu antar aṭṭhakāsu himapātasamaye najjā Nerañjarāyaṃ nimujjanti pi, ummujjanti pi, ummujja-nimujjam pi karonti.*

2 To quote only a few instances : *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, p. 1, *Udāna*, p. 10 : *Uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā Nerañjarāya tīre. Lalita-vistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 311 : *yenoruvilvā ......tatrâdrākshin nadīṃ Nairañjanām. Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 123.

3 *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, p. 33 : *Addasa kho Nadī-Kassapo Jaṭilo* (*Uruvela-Kassapassa*) *kesamissaṃ jaṭāmissaṃ......udake vuyhamāne......*(*tathā*) *Gayā-Kassapo.*

4 *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 336 ; *Mahāvastu*, Senart's Ed., Vol. II, p. 264. A confusion is apt to arise from the divergence of the two readings *Nāganadī* and *Nāganandī*. If the first reading be adopted, one may very well suggest that the Naira janā was also known as a Nāganadī, in which the Nāga-maidens delighted in sporting.

5 *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233, where Buddhaghosha suggests two different readings : *Senāni-gāmo 'ti pi pāṭho.*

6 *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 311 ; *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 123.

out that in a remote period of time it served as a military outpost or cantonment[4] (a sort of modern Barrackpore, as we might say). Buddhist literature places on record how before his attaining Buddhahood the ascetic Siddhârtha was charmingly impressed by this locality on his first arrival here. His impression finds a marvellous expression in the following measured terms :

"*Ramaṇiyo vata bho bhūmibhāgo, pāsādiko cha vanasaṇḍo, nadī cha sandati setakā sūpatitthā ramaṇiyā samantā cha gocharagāmo, alaṃ vat'idaṃ kulaputtassa padhānatthikassa padhānāyāti.*"[1]

"Pleasantly picturesque is this part of land. Delightful is the sight of the grassy woodland. The river (Nerañjarā) is flowing on in a glassy stream, showing the bathing places with gradual descents of steps,[2] presenting a charming landscape, and affording glimpses into the neighbouring hamlets easy of access. This must needs be the fitting place for a scion of a noble race strenuously striving after the highest attainments !" Forthwith Siddhārtha, the eternal glory of the Śākya race, made up his mind to enter on his epoch-making struggle on the very site.[3]

The significance of the above text has been elucidated substantially in the same manner in later Buddhist works, though the points of difference, however slight, are not without importance. By the phrase "pleasantly picturesque" Buddhaghosha understands that the stretch of land was bedecked with flowers of various kinds, blossoming on

[1] Cf. *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 311 ; *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, pp. 123-124.

[2] *Papañcha-sūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233 : *sūpatitthan ti anupubba-gambhīrehi sundarehi titthehi upetaṃ.*

[3] *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 311 : *Prahāṇārthī yan nvāham ihaiva tishṭheyam.*

land and in water." By the "delightful grassy woodland" he tries to convey the idea of "a variegated woodlard capable of generating joy like a majestic peacock's tail."[1] These two ideas are expressed in the Mahāvastu in such a manner as to make the place appear as "a sequestered valley, where the umbrages of trees command an enjoyable sight, the fields and fallows and the human habitations graced with the calm beauty of lakes and pools."[2] By "the glassy stream" Buddhaghosha understands in agreement with the authors of the Mahāvastu and the Lalitavistara nothirg but the river Nerañjarā or Nairañjanā of cool and crystal water, mudless and pure.[3] The Lalitavistara, however, describes the Nairañjanā, just as the Mahābhārata the Phalgu, as a river with the banks adorned with trees and shrubs (*druma-gulmair alaṅkṛitā*). The expression "the neighbouring hamlets of easy access" (*gochara-gāma*) is explained by Buddhaghosha as signifying "the surroundirg localities not far from that place (Senānigāma), easy of communication, and where sojourning mendicants might go round to get an easy supply of their daily food."[4] The Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu describe the Senāpati-

[1] *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233: *supupphita-nānappakāra-jalaja-thalaja-puppha-vichittaṃ manoramaṃ.*

[2] *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 123: *vṛiksha-mūlānī prāsādikāni darśanīyāni, prāntāni viviktāni vigatavyasanāni (?vigata) janapadāni manojña-hrada-sayyakāni pratisaṃlayane ārūpyāṇi.*

[3] *Papañchasādanī*, Part II, p. 233: *Nadīñ cha sandatī ti sondamānañ cha maṇi-kkhandhasadisaṃ vimala-nīla-sītala-salilaṃ Nerañjaraṃ nadīṃ addasaṃ......pari-suddhaṃ nikaddamaṃ.* Cf. *Lalitavistara, Mitra's Ed.*, p. 311; *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 123. The Pāli scholiasts seek to explain the name Nerañjarā as signifying a stream of faultless water (*nelā-jalā*) or one of bluish water (*nīlā-jalā*).

[4] *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 234: *Tassa padesassa samantā avidūre gamanāgamanasampannaṃ sampattapabbajitānaṃ sulabhapiṇḍagocharagāmañ cha.* Cf. *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 123.

grāma as a plain surface of earth (*samaṃ cha bhūmi-bhāgaṃ*).

It is evident from the above description that Uruvelā at the time of Siddhârtha's enlightenment embraced an expanse of land in which the Senānigāma stood in the centre of a round of hamlets within easy reach. Happily the Therīgāthā preserves for us the name of one of these encircling hamlets in the local epithet *Nāla* or *Nāḷa* ("a man of Nālā or Nāḷā") applied to Upaka, the Ājīvika.[1] The Therīgāthā-Commentary distinctly says that Nālā or Nāḷā was a hamlet in the near vicinity of the site of the Bo-tree (*Bodhimaṇḍassa āsanna-padese*).[2] The Chūlavaṃsa expressly represents a hamlet adjoining the Bo-tree as the birth-place of the great Pāli commentator Buddhaghosha.[3]

Depending on the travels of Hwen Thsang one can say that Uruvelā of yore extended north east 14 or 15 *li* at least from the spot of the Bo tree as far as the Prāgbodhi hill which was reached by him by crossing the river Phalgu from a point near the base of the Gayāśirsha hill.[4] As regards its southern extension, Buddhist literature enables us to determine that it was outskirted by an extensive jungle-tract known as Vaṅka, Vaṅga or Vaṅkahāra janapada, inhabited by an aboriginal people, a primitive race of hunters (*migaluddakā*).

The jungle-tract was dotted over with small villages, each under its own headman (*gāma-jeṭṭhaka-luddaka*, the chief of the village hunters),[1] and it swarmed with a very

[1] *Therīgāthā*, the psalms of Sister Chāpā.
[2] *Paramatthadīpanī*, *Therīgāthā-Commentary*, p. 225.
[3] *Bodhimaṇḍasamīpamhi jāto brāhmaṇa-māṇavo* |
[4] Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, II, p. 114.

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pernicious breed of flies.[2] We can also glean this information that these aborigines grew to revere the Ājīvika and such other ascetics and recluses as their religious guides (*arahantā*).[3] From the topographical position one may well surmise that the jungle-tract is no other than the modern district of Hazaribagh on the western border of Bengal, and that the savage inhabitants are no other than the forefathers of the Santals, Oraons and Mundas of to-day. If we take up the question how the Ājīvika and like other ascetics and recluses could command reverence in this part of the land, the answer verily suggests itself that about three centuries before the advent of the Buddha the Mount Sameta-śikhara or Pareshnath hill in the Hazaribagh district had become hallowed by the death of Pārśva, the precursor of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism.

The stage in which the entire region of Gayā is presented in the Buddhist records, earlier or later, does not suggest the idea of its being an abode of the aborigines, but rather holds before our eyes a clear picture of a land within the pale of Hindu civilisation. In giving the historical origin of the name of the village Senā-nigama, Buddhaghosha, as we have seen, has made a clear hint at the fact that in earlier times a regular military outpost or cantonment had to be provided there, and it is most likely that this was necessitated for repelling the expected attacks of the aboriginal hunters who had been its primitive inhabitants.

1 *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 255.

2 *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 255 : *Tasmiṃ janapade chaṇḍa-macchikā honti.*

3 *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., p. 255, where Upaka, the Ājīvaka, is referred to by a chief of the village hunters as a representive of their Arhats (*amhākaṃ arahantā*).

Vaṅkahāra was up till the time of the Buddha a jungle-tract, which could be reached from Uruvelā only by a tedious bye-way (*ummaggaṃ gahetvā*), while Gayā proper was linked with Uruvelā by an easy and convenient high way (*addhāna-magga*).[1]

At the time of Siddhârtha's enlightenment the most prominent man in the village of Senānigāma was Senāni[2] or Nandika,[3] father of Sujātā, and Sujātā herself was the married girl and young mother whose offering of milk-porridge served to bring about a great turning point in Siddhârtha's momentous career. A remarkable banyan tree standing in the village of Senānigāma and not far from the bank of the Nerañjarā was believed by the local people to have been an abode of a benevolent spirit, the presiding deity of the village. Sujātā is said to have made a prayer to the tree-spirit expressing this solemn vow that if the deity were pleased to grant her two wishes, one for being married into a family of equal social status and the other for obtaining a son for her first born child, she would honour the deity with religious offerings every year even at the cost of a hundred thousand pieces of money. On the fulfilment of these wishes, she proceeded, true to her vow, to make necessary preparations for the first year's offering on the full-moon day of *Vaiśākha* (April-May). In this connexion we are given an insight into the worldly prosperity of hers and of her father. She shared the fortune of having a

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Part I, p. 171.

[2] *Papañchasūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233: *Senāni nāma Sujātāya pitā, tassa gāme 'ti attho.* The Jātaka Nidāna-kathā refers to Sujātā's father as a *Senā-kuṭumbika.*

[3] *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 334, represents Sujātā as *Nandika-grāmika-duhitā*, and simply as *grāmika-duhitā* at p. 335, precisely as in the *Mahāvastu*, Vol. II, p. 263.

thousand milk-cows at her disposal, and the grazing ground was provided for the cattle in the Yashṭimadhuvana, evidently a pleasant woodland in the outskirt of Senānigāma. She could well afford to serve the milk-porridge prepared by her own hand in a dish of gold, to bedeck her person with the best of apparels and ornaments, to engage a number of maid-servants, and even to promise Pūrṇā, one of her attending maids, a reward of costly jewelleries for bringing her some comforting news.[1]

Uruvelā, too, as we have noted, was a great centre of Jaṭila activity, and obviously the most important of the three centres because of the seniority and high personality of Uruvela-Kassapa.[2] The hermitage of the local Jaṭilas was situated near about the bank of the Nerañjarā and not far from Senānigāma. The fire-room (*agyāgāra*) of the Jaṭilas was known to be zealously guarded against intrusion at night by a fierce snake-king, possessed of overpowering magical charm, a dreadfully venomous serpent, and within a short distance of their settlement was the sojourners' delightful resort, a grassy woodland or grove graced by the nocturnal visits of Śakra and Brahmā.[3]

Thus it is clear that apart from Senānigāma and its immediate neighbourhood which were destined to play an important part in the history of Buddhism, there was in existence a distinct and most notable centre of the Jaṭilas, both before and after the coming of the Buddha. The

[1] *Nidāna-kathā*, Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 68, *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., pp. 334-336.

[2] *Manoratha-pūraṇī*, Siamese Ed., Part I, pp. 325-326.

[3] *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, pp. 24-27.

original distinction of the two centres, one of Buddhism and the other of Brahmanism, has all through been maintained. In the Mahābhārata, for instance, we have mention of Dharmaprastha, the site sacred to Dharma or Buddha-image, and Brahmasthāna, the site sacred to Brahmā. We have already discussed that the Dharmâraṇya of the Mahābhārata is no other than the site of the Pretaśilā hill with the Brahmasara and the Brahmayūpa at its base. But the *Dharmâraṇ* (Dharmâraṇya) signifies at the present day a totally different locality,—a sacred site which is "a little over one mile to the east of Bodh-Gayā," visited by most of the Hindu pilgrims from Gayā for offering *piṇḍas* to the ancestors[1]. There is scarcely any room for doubt as to the fact that both Bodh Gayā and modern Dharmâraṇ are comprised and distinguished within the Dharmâraṇya of the later Gayā-Eulogium in the Purāṇas.

The three Kassapa leaders of the Jaṭilas of Gayā region and Uruvela-Kassapa in particular attracted the attention of the Buddha in the early days of his missionary life when his activities were still confined to the territories of Magadhan kingdom including Aṅga. The Buddhist tradition says that while he sent out his able lieutenants to all other directions for conquest, he himself undertook the arduous journey to Gayā and Uruvelā in order to perform the most marvellous feat of converting the Kassapa brothers with their huge following. This very tradition sufficiently emphasizes, as well be shown anon, the fact that on this particular

[1] *Archæological Survey of India*, Annual Report for 1908-9, p. 150, f.n. 2.

achievement would, as the Buddha then believed, depend the triumph of his mission. And why?

Now that the three Kassapa brothers came of a highly respectable Brahmin family of Magadha and that they had mastered the Vedas before their taking to the ascetic life are facts well attested by the commentary on the Thera-gāthā and that on the Aṅguttara-Nikāya respectively. As regards their subsequent career, the Vinaya-Mahāvagga preserves a vivid and authentic account impressing on our mind the high esteem in which they were held by all the people of Aṅga-Magadha, then under the suzerainty of King Bimbisāra. When at the setting in of the rains, as the Mahāvagga relates, the great fire-sacrifice would commence every year, the people of Aṅga and Magadha used to flock to the place to witness the grand performance, carrying abundant quantity of food, hard and soft, no doubt, as an ample provision of food-stuffs both for the sacrificing ascetics and others assembled, not to speak of their own selves. And when at the approach of the wet season the Buddha of superior miraculous powers, was staying at Uruvelā, the Kassapa leader of the place wished in his heart that the great recluse teacher were gone elsewhere lest his high prestige might be at a discount. The excogitation of Kassapa's heart is significantly set forth thus in the Vinaya text:

"Presently my great sacrifice is approaching, and all the people of Aṅga and Magadha will come and bring with them abundant food, both hard and soft. If the great Samaṇa should perform a wonder before that great assembly, gain and honour would increase to the great Samaṇa, and

my gain and honour would diminish! O that, the great Samaṇa might not come here to-morrow!"[1]

The whole Uruvelā ceremony was conspicuous at the inception by the absence of the Jaṭilas of Gayā and Nadī as well as their leaders. The legitimate inference would seem to be this that similar functions were simultaneously held also in those two tracts, too, which equally attracted pilgrims from all quarters, far and near. If we admit that those people also had participated, the explanation would be that the "great fire-sacrifice" was a very special ceremony that was observed in turns in the three sister tracts.

The Buddhist account, as noticed above, credits the general inhabitants of the Magadhan kingdom with an abundant supply of food-stuffs so as to suffice for the mighty congregation at the time of the great sacrifice[2]. The Brahmanical account in the Mahābhārata and the later Eulogium attribute the entire function rather to the king under whose benign rule the land was flowing with milk and honey. Thus here, too, we find in substance a corroboration of the exaggerated Brahmin account in the sober and earlier account of the Buddhists.

Turning again to the topic of the three Kassapa brothers, particularly to that of Uruvela-Kassapa, we should further add that so high was their prestige with the people of Magadhan kingdom (twelve myriads of souls) that when the Buddha repaired to Rājagṛiha, the Magadhan capital, along

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 27 : *Etarahi kho me mahāyañño pachchupaṭṭhito, kevalakappā cha Aṅga-Māgadhā pahūtaṃ khādaniyaṃ bhojaniyaṃ ādāya abhikkamissanti. Sache mahāsamaṇo mahājanakāye iddhipāṭihāriyaṃ karissanti, mahāsamaṇassa lābhasakkāraṃ abhivaḍḍhissanti, mama lābha sakkāro parihāyissanti. Aho nūna mahāsamaṇo svātanāya nāgachchheyyā 'ti.*

with them after converting them to his faith, it was so much of a riddle to the people that they could scarcely distinguish who led and who followed between the Buddha and the Kassapas, and that to clear up the mystery the Buddha had recourse to an intelligent device of asking Uruvela-Kassapa the following question the reply to which would reveal their relative positions:

Kim eva disvā Uruvelavāsi pahāsi aggiṃ kisako vadāno?
puchchhāmi taṃ Kassapa etam atthaṃ, kathaṃ pahinaṃ tava aggihuttaṃ?

"What hast thou seen, O dweller of Uruvelā, that thou who art called the gaunt one hast forsaken the fire? and ask thee, Kassapa, this matter: How is it thou hast forsaken the fire-sacrifice?"[1]

As for the ancient lines of communication, Sir George A. Grierson has furnished the following information condensing it from that given in Vol. VIII of the Reports of the Archæological Survey of India:—

"1. The old Gaya-Patna road ran along the east bank of the river Phalgu from Gaya northwards, passing close to Islampur and Tilara through Hilsa. From Tilara, however, a road must once have gone direct to Patna, as the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang travelled by it from that city. It must have been a difficult one, involving a crossing of the ancient Sone, and most of the traffic probably went along the easier road by Hilsa and Fatua, which must have been a somewhat important port.

[1] *Vinaya-Mahāvagga*, p. 36.

2. The Banaras-Rajgir road seems to have crossed the old Sone at Sonebhadr, the Morhar at Ghenjan. and the Phalgu and the Patna-Gaya road at Jaru.
3. The Ara (Arrah)—Rajgir road seems to have crossed the old Sone at Bhagawanganj, the Phalgu at Tilara and passed through or close to Islampur.
4. The Patna Rajgir road probably crossed the old Sone somewhere near Fat'hpur Kalan. It then crossed the Phalgu and Fatua branch of the Gaya-Patna road at Hilsa and passed through Nalanda and Silao.
5. The Gaya-Banaras road seems to have struck the Banaras-Rajgir road at Sone-Bhadr on the old Sone and passing through Konch, crossed the Morhar at Pali to avoid two branches of the river, which it would have to meet if it had crossed either above or below.
6. The Rajgir-Tamluk road, connecting the Bay of Bengal with the North-West, probably entered the Gaya district *via* the Singar pass and Rajauli.
7. The Banaras-Tamluk road probably went through Palamau and Ranchi."[1]

Now it will repay tracing the lines of communication stage by stage with sidelights from the earliest of Buddhist and other sources of information. So far as the Pāli canonical texts go, they contain only a general description of the Buddha and other persons journeying (1) from Rājagaha-Nālandā to Senānigāma in Uruvelā,[2] (2) from Rājagaha

[1] *Notes on the District of Gayā*, pp. 15-16. [2] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Vol. I, p. 166.

to Kassapa's hermitage in Uruvelā,[1] (3) from Rājagaha to Dakkhiṇāgiri,[2] (4) from Nālandā-Rājagaha to Pāsāṇaka-chetiya,[3] (5) from Uruvelā to Gayā proper,[4] (6) from Rājagaha to Gayā proper [5] (7) from Uruvelā-Gayā to Benares-Isipatana (Sārnāth) [6] (8) from Benares to Rājagaha [7] and (9) from Ukkala (Orissa) to Uruvelā-Gayā.[8] The texts are, however, dead silent over the question of actual routes, their directions, distances and halting places. Similarly the Eighth Rock Edict of Aśoka is mute on the point of details regarding the route by which he proceeded from Pāṭaliputra, his capital, to Sambodhi or the site of the Great Bo-tree. One definite information that may be elicited from the Ariya-pariyesana-Sutta in the Majjhima-Nikāya is that there was already in the time of the Buddha a high road (*addhāna-magga*) that connected Uruvelā with Gayā proper and extended westwards as far as Benares and its vicinity. Another such information to be gleaned from the Vinaya-Mahāvagga (p. 4) is that this high road, spacious enough for caravan traffic, stretched downwards as far as the distant land of Ukkala (modern Orissa). The ancient great trade-route with its North-Western (Uttarāpatha) and South-Western (Dakkhiṇāpatha) branches, of which we have a detailed description even in the Pāli canonical texts, may be left out of consideration[9] as it has no bearing on the present subject.

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, pp 34-35.
[2] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, pp. 79-80.
[3] *Sutta-Nipāta*, Book V, *Vatthugāthā*.
[4] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 34.
[5] *Vinaya Chullavagga*, pp. 199-200.
[6] *Vinaya Mahāvagga* p. 8.
[7] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 189.
[8] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 4
[9] The latest discussion on this trade-route will be found in our *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, Notes, pp. 218-220.

In accordance with Buddhaghosha's information, the extension of the high road from the Bo-tree to the Gayā-śirsha hill covered a distance of three *gāvutas* (6 or 7 miles) and the extension of the same from Uruvelā to Benares was eighteen *yojanas* (150 miles or so), while Fa-Hian in his itinerary gives the distance of the route along the course of the Ganges from Pāṭaliputra (Patna) to Benares as twenty-two *yojanas*[1] corresponding roughly to one hundred and eighty miles. The Jātaka Nidāna-kathā definitely informs us that the Buddha proceeded from Uruvelā to Benares by the high road of eighteen *yojanas*, and that he was able to complete his peregrination in three months (from the full moon of Vaiśākha to that of Āshāḍha), but, strictly speaking, in about a month, if we deduct the period of haltages.[2] The Pāli commentaries are, however, scarcely clear on the point of halting places between Gayā and Benares, nor on that of the exact course of the peregrination, for a knowledge of which one has to depend solely on the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu, particularly on the latter. The rough-shod description in the Lalitavistara would have us believe that the Buddha walked from Uruvilvā to Gayā, from Gayā to Rohitavāstu (modern Rhotasgarh), from thence to Uruvilvā-kalpa, from the last-mentioned place to Sārathipura, and from Sārathipura to the city of Benares across the Ganges.[3] However much we may credit this statement with accuracy, it errs at least in locating Uruvilvā-kappa

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. I, p. lxvii.

[2] Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 81: the period of haltages includes seven weeks spent by the Buddha on the actual spot of and near about the Bo-tree.

[3] *Lalitavistara*, Mitra's Ed., p. 428.

to the west of Rhotasgarh in view of the proved fact that the Pāli canonical texts distinctly place it in the country of the Mallas.[1] The Mahāvastu is happily fuller and more methodical in its treatment of the subject. It traces the course of the Buddha's journey from Uruvilvā to Gayā, from thence to Aparagayā (Western Gayā), from this place to Vaśālā, from Vaśālā to a locality called Chundadvolā, from thence to Lohitavastuka (Rhotasgarh), next to Gandhapura, from Gandhapura to Sārathipura, and from thence ultimately to the city of Benares crossing the Ganges by a ferry-boat.[2] The Mahāvastu seems to mention Sārathipura as an extensive tract with its headquarters of the same name, —the whole region embracing within its area both Lohitavastu[3] and Gandhapura. It is very strange indeed to see that the rivers Pūnpūn and Sone are completely passed over in silence. The Mahābhārata, however, distinctly mentions the Ganges and the Sone as the two rivers that had to be crossed in travelling eastward to reach Kuśachīrachchhadā in the region of Magadha and the Gorathagiri from the summit of which one might have a view of Girivraja, the then capital of Magadha.[4]

We have seen that both at the time of the rise of Buddhism and in earlier times as well there was on the bank of the Gayā tank a rude stone-structure in the shape of a *ṭaṃ* or watch-tower, the inside and outside of which were known

[1] *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, Part IV, p. 103; *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, Part IV, p. 438.

[2] *Mahāvastu*, Vol. III, p. 324.

[3] Cf. *Mahāvastu*, Vol. III, p. 324: *Sārathipure Lohitavastukaṃ gachchhati.*

[4] *Mahabhārata*, Sabhāparva, Ch. 20, verse 29-30;
Atītya Gaṅgāṃ Soṇañ cha trayas te prāṅmukhās tadā |
Kuśachīrchchhadā jagmur Māgahaṃ kshetram achyutāḥ ||
Gorathaṃ giriṃ āsādya dadṛiśur Māgadhaṃ puram |

respectively as the haunts of two demons called Sūchīloma, the needle-haired, and Khara, the brick-scaled or rough-skinned, and that this continued to pass as a Yaksha-shrine till Brahmanism got a foothold on the soil of Gayā proper, and with it the Yaksha shrine became a Brahmanical temple under the dignified name of Brahmayūpa. The Sutta-Nipāta commentary furnishes the information of a totally different edifice representing it as the abode of the Yaksha Sūchīloma which stood close by the lithic watch-tower. It gives us to understand that this abode was broad-based on a pavement, well-protected, enclosed by a railing, intersected with doors and gate-towers, having in its upper part a cluster of tinkling bells and looking like a towered box. This does not however, find support in the canonical texts themselves. It is conceivable, no doubt, that a shrine of this type came into existence later on and at least when the commentary was written in the 5th or the 6th century A.D. The Pāli canon refers to Muchalinda, a serpent-king whose abode was in a pool in Uruvelā. The Jātaka-commentary and such other later Buddhist works refer to other Nāgarājas and Yakshas whose abodes were in Uruvelā and other places in the Gayā region, to Kāliya Nāgarāja, for instance, whose abode was in the midst of the river, Nerañjarā, to Sudarśana Nāgarāja of Apara-Gayā, to Yaksha Chunda of Chundadvolā, to Kamaṇḍaluka Nāgarāja of Lohitavastuka.

13. GAYĀ FROM BUDDHIST POINT OF VIEW

The rise of the Buddha marks a new epoch in the history of the Holy Land of Gayā ; but for it many interesting details

of its growing life would have been lost. And to the Buddhist if Lumbinī is the birth-place of Siddhārtha, the Deer-park at Isipatana (Sārnāth), that of Buddhism and Kusīnārā, of his art and architecture, Gayā may well claim the proud position of being the birth-place of Buddha, his Enlightened Master. If Kapilavāstu, the dominion of the Śākyas, provided a beautiful spot for the birth of Siddhārtha and a congenial field for his sports and feats, Magadha, the kingdom of Bimbisāra, certainly provided a calm retreat for the rise of the Buddha and a remarkable area for the first demonstration of his attainments and greatness. So one need not be surprised to find that in all the early records of the Buddhists the Buddha has been represented as a most remarkable product and a most successful reformer of the Magadhan kingdom.[1] But to contemplate the Land of Gayā from the Buddhist point of view is primarily to ascertain in the light of facts how it served as a solitude and retreat for deep meditations so supremely necessary for the great attainment.

But the question is—with which portion of the Gayā region the historian has to establish the vital connection of Buddhism. We can boldly maintain that in spite of certain historical associations of the Buddha and Buddhism with the Gayā proper, the sacred spots of Buddhism were really all concentrated in the tract of Uruvelā. So far as the city of Gayā or Gayā proper is concerned, the Pāli records contain nowhere any notice of it even in describing the first journey of Siddhārtha, the ascetic, from Rājagaha to Uruvelā[2]

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Part I, p. 168 ; *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 5 :
Pāturahosi Magadhesu pubbe dhammo asuddho samalehi chintito |
apāpur 'etaṃ amatassa dvāraṃ suṇantu dhammaṃ vimalenânubuddhaṃ ||

[2] *Majjhima-Nikāya*' Part I, p. 166 ; Fausböll's *Jātaka* Vo. I, pp. 66-67.

and the first journey of the Buddha to the same tract from Benares for the conversion of the Jaṭilas.[1] The Gayā proper is rightly mentioned in this connection in the Lalitavistara[2] and the Mahāvastu.[3] That the route to Uruvelā either from Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, or from Benares lay through the city of Gayā can be easily gathered from the Pāli description of the journey of the Buddha from Uruvelā to Sārnāth *via* Gayā and Benares by a high road then in existence[4] and of that of Devadatta, Sāriputta and Moggallāna from Rājagaha to the Gayāśirsha hill.[5] The Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu make no secret of the fact that in order to reach Uruvilvā from Rājagṛiha, the ascetic Siddhārtha had to walk down[6] from the Gayāśirsha hill which he used as a halting place while at the Gayā city[7]. All the records agree, however, in stating that it was upon this hill that the Buddha delivered the famous Fire-sermon (Āditta-pariyāya-sutta) addressing the Jaṭilas of the Gayā region newly converted to his faith.[8] As the Pāli records attest, this very hill gained importance in the early history of Buddhism as a place where Devadatta lived with his five hundred associates immediately after having broken away

1 *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 24; Fausböll *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 82.

2 *Lalitavistara* (Mitra's Ed.), p. 311: *Bodhisattvo yatthābhipretaṃ Gayāyāṃ vihatya Gayāśirsha-parvate.*

3 *Mahāvastu* Vol. III, p. 324.

4 *Majjhima-Nikyaā*, Part I, p. 170 *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 8: *bhagavantaṃ antarā cha Gayāṃ antarā cha Bodhiṃ addhānamagga-paṭipannaṃ disvāna.* Cf. also the account in the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 34, of the journey of the Buddha from Uruvelā to Rājagaha *via* Gayā city.

7 *Vinaya Chullavagga*, pp. 199-200.

6, 7 *Lalitavistara* (Mitra's Ed.): *jaṅghāvihāram anuchaṅkramyamāṇo.*

8 *VinayaMahāvagga*, p. 84; Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 82.

from and causing schism in the united Buddhist Order,[1] and no less as a place of the marvellous feat performed by Sāriputta and Moggallāna, the two chief disciples of the Buddha, in winning over one and all of those misguided men and compelling Devadatta, the Judas Iscariot of Buddhism, to suffer a serious discomfiture.[2]

An account of the last sojourn of the Buddha at Gayā proper may also be traced in the Pāli texts and commentaries. It records the Buddha's feat which lay in the taming of the demon Sūchīloma, the dweller of the antique tower *Taṃkita-mañcha* on the bank of the Gayā tank, situated at the entrance to the city.[3] No particular date of such achievement, if true at all, can be determined, nor can this story be seriously taken as anything more than a myth.

These are all the information that may be gathered from the Buddhist records, and there is nothing to show any further association of the Buddha or of Buddhism with the city of Gayā (*Gayā-gāma*). True that King Aśoka in his R.E. VIII alludes to his pilgrimage to the site of the Bo-tree (*Saṃbodhi*) undertaken in the 10th or 11th year of his reign, but does not in this connection mention even the name of Gayā proper. It is conceivable that he undertook even a second pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā in the 21st or 22nd

[1] *Vinaya Chullavagga*, p. 199.

[2] *Vinaya Chullavagga*, pp. 199-200. The travels of Fa Hian and Hwen Thsang clearly attest that a new sect of Buddhism founded by Devadatta could not be crushed down but maintained its identity right up to the time of their visits. Fa Hian, for instance, says that he found at Śrāvastī a body of disciples of Devadatta still existing (Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, p. xlviii). To the same effect Hwen Thsang alludes to three *Saṅghārāmas* which he came across at Karṇasuvarṇa (West Bengal), the inmates of which did not use "thickened milk following the directions of Devadatta."

[3] See *Sūchīloma-Sutta* in the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* and the *Sutta-Nipāta* as well as their commentaries.

regnal year, but that, too, must have been to the same sacred site.

Our case is that Gayā proper never ceased to be the Holy Land of the Hindus and the stronghold of Brahmanism. The mere halting on the Gayāśīrsha hill, or the preaching of the Fire-sermon on the same mount, or the taming of the demon Sūchiloma in his tower on the Gayā tank, or even the conversion of the Jaṭilas of the place did not suffice to convert the city of Gayā into a Buddhist sanctorum. Any hypothesis to the contrary is sure to be contradicted by the Pāli canonical evidence which clearly shows that the Gayāśīrsha hill, like the neighbouring region, was open to all without distinction of caste or creed, for we see that even Devadatta, the mortal enemy of Buddhism, could use it with impunity as a place of sojourn. Apart from the twofold information that the town of Gayā was situated to the west at a distance of four *yojanas* (40 miles in round numbers) from the Veṇuvana monastery in the suburb of Rājagṛiha and that it was "desolate and desert" at the time of his visit, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian found nothing more worthy of record about it, far less noticing any Buddhist sanctuary whatever within the limits of this town.

The point of contention is amply borne out by the itinerary of Hwen Thsang who visited the place in the middle of the 7th century A.D., which is to say, more than two and a half centuries after Fa-Hian. Like Fa-Hian, Hwen Thsang found the city in a decadent condition, and yet no foothold could be gained by the Buddhists there. For the great Chinese pilgrim expressly says that the city of Gayā which was

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, p. lxi.

"naturally strong (situated amid crags or precipices)" was predominated, even when it had "but few inhabitants," by no fewer than "1000 families of Brāhmans" who could boast of their descent from an ancient *Rishi*. He further adds that they were not regarded by the reigning king of the place as his "vassals," and that "the people everywhere highly respec(ted) them."[1] It is of no less importance to note that the Gayā tank of Pāli literature, the Brahmasara of the Mahābhārata, or the Brahmakuṇḍa of the later Gayā-māhātmya continued to maintain its high sánctity as a bathing place of the Hindu folks. The Chinese pilgrim leaves the following notice of it :

"To the north of the town 30 *li* or so there is a pure fountain of water. The tradition handed down in India is that it is called 'holy water' ; all who bathe or drink thereof are cleansed from whatever defilement of sin they have."[2]

What is more, Mount Gayā (*i.e.*, the Gayāśīrsha hill), too, continued to enjoy, "with its sombre valley, streams, and steep and dangerous crags," the ancient fame of a Hindu sanctorum. The pilgrim records: "In India the name commonly given to this is the divine (spiritual) mountain. From old days it has been the custom for the ruling sovereign, when he comes to the throne, with a view to conciliate his subjects at a distance and to cause his renown to exceed previous generations, to ascend (this mountain) and declare his succession with accompanying ceremonies."[3]

Hwen Thsang did not depart much from the earlier

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 113.
[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 113.
[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 113.

literary tradition when he says that in old days the Buddha had delivered the Ratnamegha and such other *Sūtras* on Mount Gayā. Our difficulty begins when he would have us believe that on the top of this very hill he saw "a *stūpa* about 100 feet high, which was built by Aśoka-rāja," and which exhibited curious prodigies and emitted from it an ineffable effulgence[1]. We must take this part of his account with a grain of salt. For, in the first place, there is no authentic evidence to prove that King Aśoka built any Buddhist sanctuary in or near about Gayā. Secondly, were there any such mound in real existence and on such an elevation, it is not likely that this could escape the notice of so vigilant a pilgrim as Fa-Hian. Thirdly, not the slightest vestige of such a structure now remains to confirm his statement. We may make only this concession that he witnessed some kind of a Hindu shrine on the top of the hill which he must have mistaken for a Buddhist one. It will be noted that the word *stūpa* has in several instances been rather loosely used by the Chinese traveller to denote a shrine (*chaitya*). That he saw things sometimes through the Buddhist spectacles may be discerned from his naming the river past the Gayā city not as Phalgu but distinctively as Nairañjanā,[2] while, as we have seen, even in the earliest of Buddhist records the river Nerañjarā or Nairañjanā has been kept distinct from the river flowing by the Gayā proper.

This does not prevent us, however, from admitting the possibility of the erection of Buddhist sanctuaries in after ages

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 113.
[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 112.

on sites lying to the south or south-east of Mt. Gayā marking the southern boundary of the city, the sites which may be easily included in the northern extension of Uruvelā. Even granting that Hwen Thsang found in existence a *stūpa* or some such commemorative shrine on Mt. Gayā, our contention still holds good that it could not have been built by King Aśoka, nor could the city of Gayā have become a foothold of Buddhism by reason of such an isolated sanctuary, which, if at all, is nothing but an accident. Had he come across any *saṅghārāma* anywhere in the Gayā proper, whether on the high elevation of the hill or on the low level of the river-bank, we might, no doubt, have easily recognised it as a Buddhist holy land.

Even as regards the sandy tract of Uruvelā, the *prāchīna* or ancient Uruvilvā of the Lalitavistara, the portion known as Senā-nigama, Senānī-gāma or Senāpatigrāma and its immediate neighbourhood are recognized in all early Buddhist records up to the time of Fa Hian as the sacred area inseparably associated with the great event of Buddhahood and the history of Buddhism. Our point is that Uruvelā derived its high sanctity in the eye of the Buddhist from its connection with the most ardent and arduous endeavours of Siddhārtha, the ascetic, and his glorious accomplishment in his Buddhahood. The primary connection of Senā-nigama is with the endeavours and that of its immediate neighbourhood with the accomplishment. The accounts in the Pāli Buddhist literature and such Sanskrit Buddhist works as the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu vaguely state that since his first arrival at Uruvelā, Siddhārtha, the seeker of the highest good, spent half-a-dozen of fruitless years in

incredibly austere penances somewhere in the outskirts of Senā-nigama, being attended by five Brahmin ascetics and associates who deserted him disgusted but only to become his first and devoted disciples a little later on. It was here again that the princely ascetic partook of the palatable plate of porridge so sweetly served by Sujātā under a lordly banyan believed to have been the abode of the presiding deity of the locality. It is easy to gather from these accounts that Sujātā's residence was on the other side of the river Nerañjarā which he must have crossed in order to reach the actual spot of the holy peepul tree destined to be eternally associated with the event of the Great Enlightenment. There is a clear indication that he gently got down into the river by the flight of steps of a bathing ghat and crossed it at a point where it was fordable in the dry season and that in so doing he had to carefully avoid the danger of a great whirlpool in the mid-stream which was the dread of the people as an infernal dwelling of a dragon king Kāla or Kālika. It is clear from this that, as now, the Nerañjarā was never dried up even during the hot summer, for it is said to have been forded on the full-moon of *Vaiśākha* (April-May). Even it may be satisfactorily proved that the hill-stream has not changed its course during so many centuries, the spot of the Bo-tree as located in Buddhist literature with reference to this stream continuing practically to be the same to this day. The accounts, both in Pāli and Sanskrit, speak of a good space existing between the bank of the Nerañjarā and the Bo-tree linked by a spacious causeway.[1] The Pāli

[1] Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 70. *Bodhisatto nadītīramhi........divā-vihāraṃ katvā sāyaṇhasamaye......aṭṭhusabhavitthārena maggena Bodhirukkhâbhimukho pāyāsi* *Lalitavistara* (Mitra's Ed.), p. 240: *Yāvach cha nadyā Nairañjanā yāvach cha Bodhi-maṇḍāt etasmin antare*

account, however, clearly points out that the way of the Bodhisattva lay through a well-grown *sāl* forest bordering the river.[1] An important point of difference between the account in the Pāli Jātaka Nidāna-kathā and that in the Lalitavistara is that the former represents the entire site of the Bo-tree simply as a sombre woodland where this sacred tree stood in the centre lording it over the sylvan kingdom,[2] while the latter is particular about the mention of so many small votive shrines, *ratnavedikās* and *ratna-vyomakas* scattered over the woodland expanse.

Over and above the actual spot of the Bo-tree which enjoys the fame of being the navel of the earth, the main centre of interest for the Budddist world, most of the later Buddhist works in Pāli and Sanskrit recognise and extol as many as eight other spots near about the holy tree, the spots reminiscent of the early days of the Buddha's enlightenment. These works distinctly mention that the Buddha spent a period of seven weeks immediately following his great accomplishment. In accordance with the Jātaka Nidāna-kathā the first week he spent under the shade of the very tree, at the *Bodhimaṇḍa* itself. The second week was spent at a spot within a few paces north-west of the tree where he remained steadfastly looking at his seat under the tree (*Animisa*). He then spent the third week at a small space on the north just between the tree and the *Animisa* walking east and west, the space which became the site of the Jewel-walk shrine (*Ratana-chaṅkama chetiya*). The fourth week he spent on a ground a few yards north-west of the

[1] Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol. I, p. 70.
[2] *Lalitavistara* (Mitra's Ed·), p· 341.

Bo-tree developing the higher phases of his doctrine, where he found a small solitary chamber known as Jewel-house (*Ratana-ghara*), and the fifth at the Neat-herd's banyan (*Ajapāla-nigrodha-mūlè*) lying at some distance from the compound of the holy tree, pondering over the new doctrine just evolved by him. He now went to spend the next week at the dwelling of Muchalinda under a tree overlooking the pool to both of which the Nāga king lent his name. The seventh or last week he found himself, at the foot of a lordly tree called *Rājâyatana* enjoying rest and bliss. It was here that two caravan merchants, Tapassu and Bhallika, who were journeying north from Ukkala (Orissa), happened to wait upon the Enlightened One, and duly paid their homage. From thence he went back to the Neat-herd's banyan where he finally made up his mind to promulgate the new truths to the world and decided at the same time to go to the far-famed Deer-park near Benares for the purpose. On his way to the Gayā proper he chanced to come across an Ājīvaka, Upaka by name, whom he tried to convince of his high attainment. And besides this meeting-place, the Nidāna-kathā lays stress on the hermitage of Uruvela-Kassapa and its neighbourhood where on his return from Benares he sojourned for a while and did convert the three Kassapa brothers and all their Jaṭila followers of the Gayā region to his own faith.[1]

The Vinaya Mahāvagga has to say nothing about the three weeks following the first spent under the Bo-tree, and presents an account of just four weeks, namely, the weeks connected with the Bo-tree, the Neat-herd's banyan, the

[1] Fausböll's *Jātaka*, Vol· I, pp. 82 foll.

Muchalinda tree, and the tree called Rājāyatana. Notwithstanding the gap, the chain of events is practically the same.[1]

The omission of three weeks in the Vinaya Mahāvagga may be just due to an incompleteness of the text that has come down to us. The tradition of seven weeks is corroborated, however, by the Lalitavistara, although the setting of events is somewhat different. On complete agreement with the Pāli accounts, the Lalitavistara fixes the meeting of the Buddha with Upaka, the Ājīvika, at a place between the Bo-tree on one side and the Gayāśīrsha hill on the other.

A wide discrepancy as to the exact place of meeting of the Buddha and Upaka is to be noticed in the account given in the Mahāvastu which agrees, nevertheless, with the Lalitavistara in creating further associations of Buddhism with the halting places of the Buddha on his way from Gayā to Benares, the associations which are more or less of a mythical character, we mean with such places as Apara-Gayā, Chundadvolā, Lohitavāstu, Gandhapura and Sārathipura.[2]

Regarding the associations of the Buddha or of Buddhism with the Gayā region, these are all that can be gleaned from the Buddhist literary works, and still we feel quite secure when we maintain that the city of Gayā did never cease to be the Hindu holy land yielding place to Buddhistic predominance.

It has already been pointed out that the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian found no Buddhist monastery (*saṅghārāma*) or

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, pp. 1-9.
[2] *Mahāvastu*, Vol. III, p. 329.

sanctuary (*chaitya*) to note while he was staying in the city of Gayā. The three monasteries which he found then in existence were standing all within the region of Uruvelā and close by the Bo-tree. All the Buddhist sanctuaries, comprising as they did the votive structures and images of the Buddha, were seen by him on the sites and spots in Uruvelā which became traditionally associated with the endeavours and wanderings of Siddhārtha, the event of Buddhahood, the seven periods following, and the triumphant conversion of the Jaṭilas. It will be noticed that Fa Hian is in perfect agreement with Buddhaghosha when he credits, not specifically the great builder Aśoka, but rather indefinitely "men in after ages (*pacchimajanatā*)" with all such erections.

As regards the episodes of the seven periods and the conversion of the Jaṭilas, there is hardly any noteworthy point of difference between the itinerary of Fa Hian and the earlier or later Buddhist literary accounts, the Chinese traveller does not depart from the literary tradition in locating the place of six year penances of the Bodhisattva near about the site of the Bo-tree, not very far from it at any rate. Walking south some 20 *li* from the city of Gayā he arrived at this place and found it "well wooded."[1] But he certainly deviates from the literary tradition, hitherto known to us, when he records that immediately after partaking of the porridge of the village girls (headed by Sujātā) and before repairing to the Bo-tree, the Bodhisattva walked up to a hill, about half a *yojana* (four or five miles) to the north-east of the sacred tree, and found there a cave or

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, p. lxi.

"stone-cell' which presented itself at first sight to be the fitting place for his profound meditation, but which, on second thoughts, he relinquished as unsuitable for the purpose, leaving just a mysterious shadow behind.[1]

This hill, described as Prāgbodhi (Po-lo-ki-pu-ti or Pre-enlightenment), and the cave are located by Hwen Thsang at a place, which lay across the great river of Gayā and opposite the city and at a distance of 14 or 15 *li* (four or five miles) north-east from the holy Bo-tree, a description tallying with that of Fa Hian. The hill with its cave acquired a special religious sanctity as a place of Buddhist pilgrimage, where "every year, on the day of breaking up the season of *Wass* (*Varshā* or Buddhist Lent), religious laymen from different countries" used to throng together "for the purpose of making religious offerings to the faithful."[2]

Hwen Thsang, too, locates the spot of the Bodhisattva's fruitless penances for six years "not far from" the Bo-tree. His itinerary goes only to prove that with the progress of time legends multiplied just to furnish excuses for the further cropping up of devotional erections, all within the tract of Uruvelā, mostly within the pale of Senāni-gāma and its neighbourhood, and specially on the sacred site of the proud Peepul, the far-famed Bo.[3] The really new information in Hwen Thsang's travels is that the wooded and sandy

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, pp. lxi-lxiii.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 114. Regarding the hill and the cave we have the following note in the *Gaya District Gazetteer*, p. 233 : "On the eastern side of the Nilājan, or Phalgu river opposite Bodh Gayā, is a narrow range of hills......sometimes called the Mora and sometimes the Ganjās Hills, but the middle portion of it is locally known as Dhongra Hill.. ...About half way down the (slope on the north-west), quite hidden from below by a wall of rock, is a cave at the base of a precipitous cliff."

[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 114-136.

strip of land between the two rivers, Nairañjanā (*Ni-len-shan-na*) and Mohānā (*Mo-ho*), now forming the site of the village Bakraur (Vaṅkapura or Vakrapura), grew to be a sacred place of Buddhism in course of time.[1] The hill, then known by the name of Kukkuṭapādagiri or Gurupādagiri and other such sacred places of the Buddhists noticed by the great Chinese pilgrim beyond and to the east of the river Mohānā need not concern us here as these lie outside the boundary of the holy region of Gayā and hence outside the scope of our enquiry.

Thus, it is evident even from the testimony of Hwen Thsang that by the time of his visit Buddhist sanctuaries had enormously grown in number over the tract of Uruvelā. All the spots in that tract which were associated with the Buddhahood of Siddhārtha and the early activities of the Buddha, including the hermitage of the Jaṭilas, became the befitting places for votive erections, installations and offerings of the Buddhists. Even such a Buddha-legend as that of the Mātiposaka Jātaka (Fausböll, No. 455) were availed of in giving a Buddhist stamp on the legend of the time-honoured tank Mataṅga-vāpi.[2] But all the same the expansion of Buddhist predominance was limited as yet to the region of Uruvelā. The city of Gayā or Gayā proper remained unaffected throughout and retained its distinctive Hindu character.

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II. pp. 138-139.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 138.

14. GAYĀ FROM HINDU POINT OF VIEW

Applying a historical process of reduction we are able to peep into that remote period of time when the holy region of Gayā was inhabited by the aborigines and the religion of the place consisted in demonolatry,—in the worship of Nāgas, the tutelary deities of riverine, and of Yakshas, the tutelary deities of rocky regions. These aborigines, comprised probably two distinct groups of primitive settlers, one offering worship to the Nāgas and the other to the Yakshas. From the alternate setting of the abodes or old-fashioned temples of the two classes of demi-gods in the Mahāvastu[1] at halting places of the Buddha on his way from Gayā to Benares, it may be surmised that the land of Gayā was once dotted over with alternate settlements of their respective votaries. It seems certain that the primitive settlers of the land of Gayā were partly represented by an ancient tribe of hunters (*migaluddakas*) who were the veritable ancestors of the Santals, Orāons and Mundās of the Hazaribagh district. It is easily conceivable that the Hindu colonisers of Gayākshetra occupied the land by wresting it from the hands of these primitive settlers who were driven off to the hills around, south, east and west. There is a clear hint, as we noted, in Buddhaghosha's comment on the name of Senā-nigama or Senānī-gāma that a regular military outpost or cantonment had to be maintained in the southern tract of Uruvelā to repel the attacks of such a race of savages. It is evident from the Sūchiloma Sutta,

[1] *Mahāvastu*, Vol. III, pp. 324 foll.: *Apara-Gayāyāṃ Sudarśano nāma Nāgarājā. Chundadvolāyāṃ Chundo nāma Yaksho. Lohitavastuke Kamaṇḍaluko nāma Nāgarājā. Gandhapure Kandho nāma Yaksho.*

contained in two of such ancient and authoritative Pāli texts as the Saṃyutta Nikāya and the Sutta-nipāta, that as early as the time of the Buddha there could be seen on the bank of the Gayā tank an antique abode or temple of Yaksha Sūchiloma, which was a rude structure of stone standing high like a *ṭaṃ* or bamboo watch-tower of the village cultivators. The inside of this tower was known as the abode of Sūchiloma, the needle-haired demon, and the outside that of another demon called Khara or Rough-skinned. As evidenced by a representation of the first-named demon and the identifying inscribed label on a pillar of the Barhut stone-railing,[1] the legend of Sūchiloma was as old as the second century B.C., if not earlier. Indeed the antique abode of Yaksha Sūchiloma is the solitary structure in stone in the city of Gayā which finds mention in the earliest of Pāli records. As a point of departure from the original story, the commentary on the Sutta-nipāta, written not earlier than the 5th century of the Christian era, has attempted to show that the actual abode of the demon was an edifice quite different from the tower. Further, the commentary description of the Yaksha abode brings before our vision something resembling in outline as well as details a Hindu temple of worship. The only reasonable inference to be drawn from this is that this new edifice was the construction of a later period when Hindu piety sought to express itself permanently in the form of architecture.

We have seen that by the time of the rise of the Buddha the region of Gayā had not only come within the pale of Aryandom and formed an integral part of the Magadhan

[1] Cunningham's *Stūpa of Bharhut*, Pl. XXII. 2.

kingdom but had also acquired distinction as a place of Hindu pilgrimage, and no less as a place sanctified by the residence and religious rites of the matted-hair Jaṭilas who represented an old order of Vedic ascetics.

The tank and the river of Gayā were the bathing places where during the last four days of *Māgha* (Feb.-March) and the first four days of *Phālguna* (March-April) multitudes of men drew together from all directions and performed ablutions in the holy waters in their deep-rooted belief that the *tīrthas* above named were capable of washing away their sins and blessing them with merit. The river Nerañjarā, too, with its silver-white flights of steps rolled into that proud position of religious sanctity as a bathing place of pilgrims. All present within the holy area, ascetics or householders, vied with one another in the matter of purifying themselves with the sacred waters. The Jaṭilas or priestly ascetics of the place, it may be recalled, were sanctimonious as to the observance of particular modes of ablution, attached special importance to each of the four specified modes of 'emerging,' 'plunging,' 'repeated diving' and 'sprinkling,' and went even to the length of burying themselves in the watery grave by plunging. The vividness with which the Pāli accounts present the picture of the whole spectacular scene of bathing before our eyes only goes to prove its reality. Though separated by so many centuries, we are enabled to visualise the amazing spectacle of the busy bathers, some descending down the steps, some ascending, some doing preliminary washing, some plunging, some emerging, some diving, some sprinkling, some shivering in cold, some warming themselves with the fire of the altars on the bank, while yonder to see

others chanting hymns from the Vedas, muttering *mantras*, invoking Indra, or offering worship to the sun and the moon. True that bathing was a popular ceremony at the locality. But Buddhist literature would make the Brahmins as a class responsible for the wide prevalence of belief in its high efficacy (*udaka-suddhikā brāhmaṇā*). And this belief gained so much ground in the country that those among the Hindu people who were unable to go personally would have water fetched for them in jugs by others.

Probably Śrāvaṇa (July-August), the first month of the then current new year, was the season for the Great fire-sacrifice (*Mahāyañña*) of the Jaṭilas. This was a most solemn occasion for all the people of Aṅga and Magadha making a huge population of 12 *niyutas* or 120 lacs to congregate at the place and contribute their share of food and drink. From this it may be easily imagined how vast was the concourse of people, how grand and imposing was the ceremony and sumptuous the feast accompanying[1], and in what high esteem the Jaṭilas and their leaders were held by the masses of people.

There can be no gainsaying that ceremonial bathing in the holy waters and oblations to sacrificial fire (*aggi-hotta*) constituted the daily or routine life of the matted-hair ascetics, that both these rites were resorted to as effective means of purification, or that, as such, the motive behind both was essentially hygienic. Each of these two rites had its own special day during the year, the one of bathing in the month of *Phālguna* (March-April) and the other of fire-

[1] To make an idea of the function of *Mahāyañña*, see *Dīgha-Nikāya*, Vol. I pp. 135 foll. ; *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, Vol II, p 207.

sacrifice in *Srāvaṇa* (July-Aug.). One cannot fail to notice a distinction between the two great occasions.

The vernal ceremony of bathing was popular in origin, whereas the rainy-season function of great fire-sacrifice was ushered into existence by the *Ṛishis* who were the cultured representatives of Indian knowledge and wisdom. On the former occasion the pilgrims from all quarters crowded the place and went back after having a touch of the holy water and rendered the holy site a positive nuisance without evincing, however, any community of feeling for the commonness of a cause, as if one had nothing to do with the other. And on the latter occasion the centre of attraction was a highly distinguished body of sacrificing priests and ascetics and the whole interest lay round the sacred fire lit by them. All these tend to show that the whole current of religious life in the Gayā region oscillated between the vulgar and the elect, now flowing to this, now to that, on one occasion the cultured moving with the masses and on the other the masses obeying the beacon call of the men of light and leading, and thus maintaining the balance of life in tension.

There were three different settlements of the Jaṭilas at Gayā proper, Nadī and Uruvelā, each under its own leader. The three leaders are represented as three brothers, the scions of an old and distinguished Brahmin family of Magadha. As Hwen Thsang locates them, the three centres of Gayā, Nadī and Uruvelā were situated from north to south, one below the other. It equally appears from the Vinaya description that all of them bordered the river Nerañjarā and its lower course known as the Gayā river or Phalgu. The

Vinaya text, too, places Nadī midway between Uruvelā and Gayā, and would even point out how a thing floating down in the Nerañjarā could be visible first from the tract of Nadī and then from the city of Gayā. It is Buddhaghosha alone who labours to locate Nadī somewhere near a bend of the Great Ganges. And as a matter of fact, just as the village of Urel preserves the memory of Uruvelā, the town of Gayā that of the Gayā tract, so the village of Nadī on an old bed of the Sone may be said to remind one of the ancient tract of Nadī. Buddhaghosha's location of the tract of Nadī may, however, be harmonized with Hwen Thsang's, if his expression *mahā-Gaṅgā-vaṅkesu* be taken to denote a doab between two such large streams as the Nerañjarā and the Mahānadī or Mohānā.

At the time of the rise of Buddhism, precisely as at the present day, the Gayāśira or Gayāśīrsha hill (modern Brahmayoni) stood as the prominent landmark of the town of Gayā. The spelling of its name as met with in the Mahābhārata is *Gayaśira*, and the same spelling is suggested also in Aurṇanābha's interpretation of the Vedic allegory of Vishṇu's *tripādavikrama*, as finds expression in the word *Gayaśirasi*. Consonant with this earlier spelling, some of the Pāli scholiasts has hinted at *Gayāsīsa* having been the same word as *Gajasīsa*, "the Elephant's head," and the hill having been called *Gajasīsa* or *Gayasīsa*[1] from its resemblance with the crown of an elephant. The same scholiast has made mention of a colossal block of stone on this hill which was spacious enough to provide seats for no fewer than one thousand persons.

[1] For *Gaja*=*Gaya*, cf. Monier Williams' Sanskrit Dictionary, *sub voce* Gaya, *Gayasiṃha*=*Gajasiṃha*.

The clear implication of this suggestion is that it is the hill which lent its name to the holy land.

The southernmost division of Uruvelā was then as now a land of sand,—a region watered by the crystal flow of the Nerañjarā and noted for its wide reach of sunny beaches. The river never dried up, even during the cold season of the year. The whole landscape is described by the Buddha as the most charmingly picturesque with the neighbouring hamlets of easy access and the marble-white bathing *ghats* leading down to the babbling brook by the gradual flights of steps. Besides, one cannot but be struck by the existence of a high road connecting Uruvelā with Gayā and Gayā with Benares on the one hand and Utkala (Orissa) on the other, thereby serving as a link between the north and the south of the Indian continent. The town of Gayā could be reached either from Benares by this high road or from Rājagaha, the then capital of the Magadhan kingdom, by a short route that crossed the Phalgu near about the Barābar hills, the Gorathagiri of the Mahābhārata. And it must be noted that Rājagaha itself was but the starting point of a great trade-route, the Southern high road (*Dakkhiṇāpatha*) which extended as far north-west as Taxila and as far south-west as Paithan on the Godāvarī. And the Mahāvastu, as we noted, mentions such localities as Apara-Gayā (Wesern Gayā), Vaśālā, Chundadvolā, Lohitavastuka (Rotasgarh), Gandhapura and Sārathipura as halting places on the high road leading from Uruvilvā and Gayā to Benares and Sārnāth.

Prince Siddhārtha's attainment of Buddhahood in Uruvelā marks an epoch in the history of the Gayā region.

His earlier wanderings and subsequent ponderings served to create memorable historical associations affording good excuses for the cropping up of various Buddhist shrines of considerable architectural and sculptural value. The conversion of the Jaṭilas to the new faith was, no doubt, a decisive triumph for Buddhism, though its immediate effect on the religious life of the Gayā region cannot be determined with any amount of certainty. All that may be gathered from subsequent history is that the Gayā proper or city of Gayā remained as before a stronghold of Brahmanical Hinduism, while Buddhism gained predominance over the tract of Uruvelā.

The inter-regnum between Ajātaśatru and Bindusāra is a dark gap in the history of the holy land. The light begins to dawn again with the benign reign of Priyadarśī Aśoka in the third quarter of the 3rd century B.C. The Eighth Rock Edict of the Great Maurya emperor of Magadha lifts up the veil just to give a misty view of the Gayā region appearing pre-eminently as a place of *Sambodhi* or Bo-tree, the living symbol of Buddha's Enlightenment. This edict evidently bears record of the Buddhist emperor's first pilgrimage to the place in his tenth or eleventh regnal year, it being claimed as the earliest instance of the emperor's persistent preference of pious tours (*dharmayātrā*) to indulgence in pleasure trips (*vihārayātrā*) of age-long royal custom. Though even the name of Gayā does not find mention in it, the edict indirectly throws some light on its internal life. The Buddhist emperor must have journeyed to the site of the Bo-tree from Pāṭaliputra, his capital, partly by the high road that led to Rājagṛiha and thence by another

road that connected Rājagṛiha with the city of Gayā. It is evident from the Mahābhārata description of the journey of the Pāṇḍavas from the Kuru country to Girivraja or old Rājagṛiha that this route passed by Gorathagiri, which was no other than the Pravaragiri of mediæval inscriptions and the modern Barābar group of hills.[1] The Mahābhārata, it will be noticed, places Gorathagiri in Magadhakshetra, the holy region of Magadha. The Sutta-nipāta account of the journey of the pupils of the Brahmin teacher Bāvari from Magadhapura, identified in the commentary with Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, to the holy rock Pāsāṇaka-chetiya testifies to the existence of this route, while the rock itself is located in the region of Magadha (Magadha-khette). From a close similarity of the two descriptions none can doubt that the holy rock of the Pāli text was either the same as Gorathagiri or some such hill as the Kauādol near about. All these may well lead us to believe that Aśoka, the great Buddhist emperor, could reach the city of Gayā and finally Bodh-Gayā, his desired destination, by this very road. The edict clearly shows that while he journeyed from his capital to the sacred site, he had to pass through localities where it was possible for him to meet the Brahmins and recluses worthy of gifts, to come across elderly people deserving pecuniary help, and to see the general run of people, both rural and urban, not excluding worthy men with whom to discuss the higher principles of piety and morality.[2]

[1] See Barua's *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, pp. 226 foll.

[2] R.E. VIII : *Tenesā dhaṃmayātā. Et-ayaṃ hoti : Bāmhaṇa-samaṇānaṃ dasaṇe cha dāne cha thairānaṃ dusaṇe cha hiraṃṇapaṭividhāno cha jānapadasa cha jānasa dasanaṃ dhaṃmānusāsṭī cha dhamaparipuchhā cha.*

It does not appear from this edict that the region of Gayā through which he had passed had yet any spot of any importance to a Buddhist pilgrim save the sacred site of the Great Bo. The impression which it creates and which lingers is that the Gayā proper representing the northern portion of the holy region was the abode and scene of activity of the Brahmanical ascetics and other recluses (*bāmhaṇa-samaṇānam*), we mean, of the *religieux* other than the Buddhists who are denoted in Aśokan inscriptions (*e.g.*, P.E. VII) by the term *Saṃghaṭhā* (*Saṃghasthā*). The truth of this observation is not far to seek. In the first place, it is clearly borne out by a controversy in the Kathāvatthu, a Pāli canonical compilation of the Aśokan period, that Buddhism as a movement was yet confined within the territorial limits of the Middle Country. Even with regard to the Middle Country which embraced the whole of the kingdom of Magadha it is not claimed that Buddhism had struck root in all parts, the frank admission being "that it was to be found where it could be found and not to be found where it could not be found."[1] Secondly, the generally accepted Buddhist tradition dates the propagation of Buddhism outside the Middle Country from after the eighteenth regnal year of the Great Maurya emperor when the Buddhist religious missions*were despatched to different directions. Thirdly, in his Thirteenth Rock Edict the Buddhist emperor definitely states that when this edict was promulgated (say, in his 13th or 14th regnal year) there was no place, barring the solitary Yona province (in the

[1] *Kathāvatthu*, I. 3: *Majjhimesu janapadesu atthi brahmachariyāvāso yattha atthi tattha atthi, yattha n'atthi tattha n'atthi. Pachchantimesu janapadesu n'atthi brahmachariyāvāso yattha n'atthi gati bhikkhūnaṃ bhikkhuninaṃ upāsakānaṃ upāsikānaṃ.*

north-west), where the various sects of the Brahmanical ascetics and other recluses were not to be found and where the masses of people had not adhered to one or the other of these sects.[1] Fourthly, as the emperor's cave-dedications clearly bear out, the Barābar group of hills sentinelling the approach to the city of Gayā was unquestionably a stronghold of the Ājīvika ascetics of that time, and the subsequent cave-dedications in the Nāgārjunī hills attributed to his successor, King Daśaratha, similarly bring home to us the continuance of the sole sway of the Ājīvikas at Barābar as well as the neighbouring range of Nāgārjunī even after Aśoka's sceptre had dropped down. And lastly, the hill which is alluded to in some of the Pāli canonical texts as *Pāsaṇaka-chetiya* or Rock-shrine, and may be identified with the Kauādol hill in the neighbourhood of the Barābar, if not precisely with it, had enjoyed, as the commentator points out, the ancient fame of having borne a sanctuary (*devaṭṭhāna*) on a huge rock.[2]

There is nothing further to record regarding the region of Gayā during the eventful reign of Aśoka or that of his successors. Even coming down to the Śuṅga period which saw the consummation of art and architecture in Barhut inner railing, its quadrants, returns, gateways and carvings, we can scarcely glean a fact having any direct bearing upon the region of our quest. It is very strange indeed that even the Manu-Saṃhitā which in its present redaction may be

[1] R. E. XIII : *Nathi chā she janapade yatā nathi ime nikāyā ānaṃtā* (*Yoneshu*), *baṃhmane chā shamane cha nathi chā kuvā pi janapadashi yatā nathi manushānaṃ ekatalashi pāshaḍashi no nāma pashāde*·

[2] *Paramattha-jotikā*, Vol. II., p. 584 : *Pāsāṇaka-chetiyan ti mahato pāsāṇassa upari pubbe devaṭṭhānam ahosi.*

fairly regarded as a compilation of the Śuṅga period maintains an eloquent silence over the importance of Gayā as the place for funeral obsequies. As a matter of fact, in the whole range of Brahmanical literature dating up to the Śuṅga age all the information that may be gathered relates to Gayā as a Vedic Ṛishi,[1] to Vishṇupada and Gayaśira as two stations of the sun in his daily course,[2] and to the word *Gaya-sādhana Gayasphāna-Gayasphāyana* signifying the promotion of domestic wealth.[3] It may be shown that each of the three items of information has a peculiar suggestion for later development in the Hindu legends of Gayā. First, the Ṛishi Gaya came to figure in the Epic and Purāṇa versions of the Gayā-eulogium as a rājarshi or royal sage lending his name to the city of Gayā. Secondly, the earlier astronomical notions of Vishṇupada and Gayaśira dropped down into names for the principal shrine and hill of Gayā town. And the earlier signification of the word *Gaya* as domestic wealth or prosperity served as a stimulus to the later conception of Gayā as a land of happy plenty, where once flowed the streams of Ghṛitakulyā, Dadhikulyā and Madhukulyā.

Now passing over the reign of the Śuṅgabhṛitya Kāṇvas which has nothing as yet to say regarding the Gayā region, we have to take note of two kings. Kauśikīputra Indrāgnimitra and Brahmamitra, whose names loom large in some of the short inscriptions on the old Stone-railing at Bodh-Gayā recording it to be a memorable erection of female

[1] RV. X. 63. 17, 64. 16; Ait. Br. V. 2. 12; AV. I. 14. 4; RV. V. 92. 10.

[2] Here the reference is to Aurṇanābha's interpretation of the Vedic allegory of Vishṇu's three strides.

[3] RV. IX. 104. 2; RV. I. 91. 12 and 19; VII. 54. 2; AV. XIX. 15. 3; Pāṇini VI. 1. 66 and comments in the Vārttika and Patañjali's Mahābhāshya.

piety. As their surnames indicate, both of these monarchs must have belonged to a Mitra dynasty, which probably rose into power in Magadha after the disruption of the Kāṇva house. But even as regards the reign of these two kings, the development of art and architecture that took place concerned exclusively the site of Bodh-Gayā, and as such does not bear any very great importance to the history of Gayā from a Hindu point of view.

So far as inscriptions go, we may summarily dispose of the Kushāṇa age as being of little help for our immediate purpose, there being nothing worthy of record with the doubtful exception of the event of installation of a colossal stone-statue of the Buddha during the reign of one King Turāmala and in *Saṃvat* 64 (first or second century A.D.). Much light may, however, be focussed on the Gayā of this age by an earlier version of the Gayā-eulogium in the Mahā-bhārata, which, as proved by some very old Pāli canonical couplets, had been shaping itself through centuries. The Epic Eulogium clearly shows the established fame of Gayā as a place of Hindu pilgrimage, and especially as the place for securing release of the departed spirits. It at once holds before our eyes a picture of Gayā as a Holy Land deriving its high sanctity and none the less its prosperity from the sacrificial rites and benevolent gifts of the royal sage Gaya, son of Amūrtarayas. The whole landscape comprised the twenty-five hill-tops, the Gṛidhrakūṭa, Udyanta, Gītanādita and the rest, with the Gayaśira lording it over them all, the large stream of Phalgu fed by countless cataracts, the Ghṛitakulyā, Dadhikulyā and the rest, and lined with a luxuriant growth of sylvan groves, Akshaya-vaṭa, the un-

dying banyan of immortal fame, Gṛidhravaṭa, the brother banyan marking the sacred approach to the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill, Tiladhenukā at the holy site of Dhenukā bearing the curious hoofmarks of the heavenly cow Kapilā with her calf's, Dharmāraṇya, the charming forest tract, sacred to Dharmarāja or Yama, with the sacred tank Brahmasara in its midst and the towering Brahmayūpa beside, Dharmaprastha, the sacred site in the south graced by the presence of the Buddha-image and the hermitage of Mataṅga, as well as Brahmasthāna, the site sacred to Brahmā. The Epic legend is well aware of the existence of Yonidvāra (Brahmayoni) on the crown of the hill Gayaśira, a natural passage underneath a boulder standing as a symbol for salvation from the womb of misery, and equally of the presence of a Śivaliṅga on the Gṛidhrakūṭa with a stone figure of Nandi, the bull attendant of Lord Śiva. It also praises the rites for the worship of Sāvitrī and Sandhyā by the Brahmins performing the Vedic rites. But strangely enough, it has nothing as yet to place on record regarding Vishṇu, his footprint or iconic form as Gadādhara or Mace-bearer. It knows nothing of any myth concerning Gayāsura, Gadāsura and Dharmaśilā. The sacred tanks Uttaramānasa, Dakshiṇamānasa and the rest do not find mention in it. The various images of the Sun-god, Gaṇeśa and Śakti and the temples enshrining them are yet far beyond its reach. The Gayā proper, as depicted in the Epic, presents predominantly a scene of nature-worship, while the solitary phallic symbol of Lord Śiva marks just the commencement of the semi-iconic stage in the process of visualisation of the image of the Divinity of the place.

The omission of Vishṇupada or Vishṇu's footprint from the Epic list of prominent objects and sites is significant. But this omission may be simply a case of deliberate exclusion due to sectarian prejudice at the back of a Śaiva manual. This belief gains in strength as we notice a similar case of omission of all symbols of Śaivism from the list of such objects and sites in a Vaishṇava work, the Vishṇu-saṃhitā, for instance, in which Vishṇupada stands out as a most distinctive object and site along with the Gayāśīrsha hill, the Undying Banyan and the Phalgu river. If we take, however, all the early mediæval Smṛiti references to Gayā or Gayākshetra in the lump, the prose passage in the Vishṇu-saṃhitā is the solitary instance where we have mention of Vishṇupada, and a verse in the Atri-saṃhitā another such instance where the pilgrim is urged to have a view of even an iconic form of Vishṇu as the divine mace-bearer (*dṛishṭvā devaṃ Gadādharaṃ*). Thus it may be safely maintained that the prevailing tendency of these Smṛiti-compilations is to represent Gayā by its natural landmarks, the hill, the river and the tree, and that the Vishṇu-saṃhitā agrees so far with the Great Epic that in both the stage of manifestation of the deity of Gayā, whether in the form of Vishṇu's footprint or in that of a phallic symbol of Śiva, is semi-iconic or merely suggestive. This remark holds equally true in the case of the Rāmāyaṇa. Another important point of agreement is in commonness of specification of Gayā as the place for funeral obsequies intending release of the departed souls. The real historical interest of the study of these literary references arises from the fact that these enable us to ascertain that Gayā had not attained the highest position

in a day as a sanctorum for the fulfilment of the above specific object. These go to show how from having been first just one of the several places of importance Gayā advanced by the gradual steps of preference (*prādhānya*) into its unrivalled seat of pre-eminence. None need be surprised, therefore, that even in the Vishṇu-saṃhitā Pushkara, situated on the Sarasvatī, is allowed to enjoy predominance over the region of Gayā. There is not a single list, however, in which Gayā has not a distinct place. Even taking into account the ancient Pāli canonical list of such *tīrthas*, we could show that Gayā had attained pre-eminence among the notable places of Hindu pilgrimage as early as the days of the Buddha.

When the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian visited eastern India in the first quarter of the 5th century A.D., he found the city of Gayā desolate and deserted, though the causes that brought about such a deplorable state of things are yet unknown. Even when, two-and-a-half centuries later, Hwen Thsang passed through this city, it had but few inhabitants, its population having consisted of a thousand families of Brahmins only. It continued, of course, as there-to-fore, to be a Hindu Holy Land, noted for the sacred water of its famous tank to the extreme north and the special sanctity of its rocky hill to the south-west. Its Brahmin inhabitants, too, stood in high esteem of the people everywhere for their acclaimed descent from a venerated sage of yore, and were not regarded as vassals by the reigning king. Both the Chinese pilgrims have in their travels recorded nothing else of importance concerning the region of Gayā viewed from a Hindu point of view but that the portion

lying to the south of the Gayā proper had come wholly under the sway of Buddhism. It is interesting to observe that the hermitage of Mataṅga of the Hindu Epic fame acquired a new tradition at the hands of the Buddhists as the sacred haunt of the wise elephant (*mātaṅga*) of the Mātiposaka-Jātaka, and the same Jātaka legend was foisted upon *Mataṅga-vāpi*, the tank commemorating the name of the self-same sage Mataṅga. In other words, the two tracts of Gayā and Uruvelā became distinct as two separate sacerd areas, the former representing the dominion of the *Akshaya-vaṭa* or Undying banyan of Hindu fame and the latter that of the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* of Buddhist fame, the former remaining in a decadent condition and the latter shining forth in the rising glory of its art and architecture.

The visit of Fa Hian was synchronus with the palmy days of the earlier Gupta emperors who exercised their full suzerainty over the region of Gayā, nay, over the whole of the kingdom of Magadha. If so, it would be going far from the historical truth to imagine that the desolation of the city of Gayā was due to any political causes. It is far safer, we think, to account for the deserted condition of the Gayā town by certain cataclysmic natural phenomenon causing havoc to the place, such as the overflooding of the hill streams that fed the Phalgu and the silting up of the great river of Gayā with its attendant evil effects. Is it not strange that nowhere in the region of Gayā has up till now been discovered any Hindu shrine or image which might be relegated to the early Gupta reign ?

Buddhaghosha who flourished during the earlier part of the Gupta period and may be regarded almost as a younger

contemporary of Fa Hian was aware of the existence of the temples of Vāsudeva and Śiva-Maheśvara (*Vāsudeva-āyatana, Issara-āyatana*) in his time,[1] although he does not specifically mention where, precisely in what part of India, these were situated. Even in his commentary on the Sūchiloma-Sutta, he does not refer to the temple of Sūchiloma as an edifice distinct from the antique tower. *Taṃ-kita-mañcha* described in the text as the real abode of the Yaksha. As a point of departure from both the original Sutta and Buddhaghosha's commentary, the Suttanipāta-Commentary which is somewhat later than the writings of Buddhaghosha distinguishes the temple of the Yaksha from the antique tower and describes it as an edifice overlooking the Gayā tank,—as a mansion broad-based on a pavement, well-protected, enclosed by a railing, provided with doors and gate-towers, adorned in the upper part with a network of tinkling bells and showing a quadrangular spire.[2] If the tradition of such a towering mansion on the bank of the Gayā tank be at all credible, its erection must be placed after the life-time of Buddhaghosha and undoubtedly within the earlier part of the Gupta period. Men in after times had erected commemorative Buddhist shrines and set up the figures of Buddha for worship at Bodh-Gayā, some of which were witnessed by Fa Hian.[3] Even three Buddhist monasteries were found in existence at this place by this Chinese pilgrim

[1] *Visuddhimagga*, p. 482.

[2] *Paramatthajotikā*, I., p. 301 : *taṃ (mañchaṃ) nissāya (Sūchiloma-) Yakkhassa bhavanaṃ Ālavakassa bhavanaṃ viya. Ibid.*, p. 222 : *Ālavakassa pana vimānaṃ bhummaṭṭhaṃ suguttaṃ pākāraparikkhittaṃ susaṃvihita-dvāra-aṭṭāla-gopuraṃ upari kaṃsajālacchannaṃ manjūsa-sadisaṃ tiyojanaṃ ubbedhena.*

[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I., p. lxiii.

at the time of his visit. There are sufficient reasons to believe that at least one of these monasteries was a memorable erection of King Meghavarṇa of Ceylon during the reign of Samudragupta whose reign had ended shortly before the visit of Fa-Hian.[1] The enigma of history still remains—why is it that the region of Gayā fails to boast of a pious Hindu erection or installation ascribable to the reign of the earlier Gupta emperors ?

There is. no doubt, an epigraphic record of the grant to a Brahmin of the village of Revatikā in the Gayā territory,[2] attributed to Samudragupta. The record is inscribed on a copper-plate. which has a seal tacked on to it. The seal itself may be genuine and much older. but the record is spurious, being the fabrication of a much later age.[3]

It might be contended that there is at least one clear epigraphic record, *viz.*, the Aphsaḍ stone inscription of Ādityasena, which establishes beyond doubt the fact of erection of a grand temple of Vishṇu at Aphsaḍ by King Ādityasena along with the memorable erection of a *maṭha* or Hindu monastic abode by his mother Śrīmatī and excavation of a large tank by his wife Queen Koṇādevī. We are aware that Ādityasena is one of the well-known Gupta kings of Magadha. But as his inscriptions clearly prove, he flourished during the latter part of the Gupta period, his date being posterior to the reign of King Harsha of Kanauj and as late as the third or fourth quarter of the 7th century A.D.[5] Even granted all these, the fact remains that Aphsaḍ

[1] See *passim*.

[2] *Gayā-vaishayika-Revatikā-grāme.*

[3] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III., pp. 254 foll.

[4] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III., pp. 201-208.

[5] Fleet's *Corpus*, Vol. III., pp. 209-210.

or Jafarpur is a village, which is situated in the Nawada subdivision of the district of Gayā and not strictly within the bounds of the Gayā region.

Near the very site of this Vishṇu temple was discovered a beautifully carved figure of a Boar representing apparently the famous Boar incarnation of Vishṇu Nārāyaṇa.[1] This figure is generally regarded as one of the lingering handiworks of art of the Gupta period. We possess indeed a definite epigraphic evidence in the Eran Stone Boar inscription of Toramāṇa to prove that the reign of the Hūṇa king Toramāṇa became noted for the building at Airikina or Eran in the Central Provinces of a stone-temple enshrining 'a colossal red-sandstone statue of a Boar, about eleven feet high, representing the god Vishṇu in his incarnation as such.'[2] If the Boar statue of the Gayā district be, as it seems likely, of the same date as the one at Eran, it cannot be attributed to an age earlier than the fourth quarter of the 5th century A.D. Here, too, we have to note that the find-spot of the statue is the village of Aphsaḍ and not the Gayā region proper.

As proved by his inscription,[3] the Maukhari chieftain, named Anantavarman, installed a beautiful image of the god Kṛishṇa in one of the Barābar hill-caves, the Lomaśa Ṛishi Cave, which was originally a cave-dedication of King Aśoka for the accommodation of the Ājīvika ascetics. There are reasons to believe that the Maukhari chieftain added a

[1] Fleet's *Corpus*, Vol. III., p. 201.

[2] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III., p. 160 : *Bhagavato Varāha-mūrtter-jagat-parāyaṇasya śilā-prāsādaḥ*.

[3] Barābar Hill-cave inscription of Anantavarman. See Fleet's *Corpus Inscript-tionum*, Vol. III. pp. 221-223.

façade with the figure of Kṛishṇa as an ornament to the cave which was left unfinished by the great Maurya emperor. It is equally proved by two other inscriptions of the same Maukhari chieftain[2] that he installed 'an image representing Śiva, in the form of Bhūtapati or the lord of beings, and his wife Pārvatī under the name of Devī,' the image 'probably of the kind, called Ardhvanārīśvara, combining Śiva and Pārvatī in one body,'[1] and another image of the goddess Pārvatī under the name of Kātyāyanī, together with the grant of a village to the same goddess, under the name of Bhavānī,[2] separately in two of the Nāgārjunī hill-caves which were originally the cave-dedications of King Daśaratha to the sect of the Ājīvikas. The Barābar and Nāgārjunī hills are situated about fifteen to eighteen miles to the north by east of the Gayā town, overlooking the Phalgu. But we have seen that the Mahābhārata locates these hills rather in the holy region of Magadha. The interest of the votive records of Anantavarman, nevertheless, is that by the time when these records were inscribed, the Barābar and Nāgārjunī caves were deserted by the Ājīvikas, their former tenants. It is historically important also to note that the Maukhari chieftain tried to acquire an immortal fame by setting up a figure of Vishṇu in his incarnation as Kṛishṇa side by side with those of Śiva-Pārvatī and Kātyāyanī in the neighbourhood of the town of Gayā which does not seem to have entertained the worship of Vishṇu in the form of Kṛishṇa, of Śiva in combination with his consort, and of Śakti under the

[1] Nāgārjunī Hill-cave inscription of Anantavarman. See Fleet's *Corpus Inscrip-tionum* Vol. III., pp. 223-226.

[2] Nāgārjunī Hill-cave inscription of Anantavarman. See Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III., pp. 226-228.

name of Kātyāyanī and Bhavānī. The records of Anantavarman are undated, although judged by their characters, these cannot be treated as earlier than the 8th century A.D.

The Meharauli posthumous iron pillar inscription of Chandra records the pious act of a powerful king named Chandra consisting in the setting up of a lofty standard of the divine Vishṇu on the Vishṇupada hill.[1] The inscription is undated. It gives us no information as to the lineage of King Chandra. The lofty standard is no other than the iron pillar bearing the inscription. The column stands at present on a part of the Delhi ridge and in a position, "which hardly answers to the description of its being on a *giri* or hill." And whether it is in its original position or was transferred from another locality, the importance of its record lies in the fact that it at once presupposes the existence of a Vishṇupada-giri or hill bearing the footprint of Vishṇu.[2]

Some of the epigraphic records, especially those inscribed during the reign of Skandagupta,[3] incontestably prove that the worship of the divine Vishṇu, even under his iconic form as the discus-and-mace-bearer (*chakra-gadā-dhara*), became prevalent in certain parts of Northern and Western India as early as the 4th or 5th century A.D. But none of these attests the prevalence of the worship of Vishṇu under such an iconic form in any part of the region of Gayā. It will be noticed that the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, too, alludes to certain sites sacred to Vishṇu, worshipped under his

[1] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III., p. 141.

[2] Our attention is drawn by Mr. Charandas Chatterjee of the University of Lucknow to the existence of two Vishṇupada hills, one at Gayā and the other near Hardwar.

[3] Cf. Junagadh Rock inscription of Skandagupta and Gangadhar stone inscription of Viśvavarman.

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iconic forms as Nārāyaṇa and Janārdana. But here again these sites are located in places outside Gayā.[1] Indeed the legend of Gayāsura in the Vāyu-Purāṇa clearly brings out this fact that the predominance of Vishṇu at Gayā came to be recognised only at a late stage. With a view to coping with vigorous efforts of the demon Gayāsura the first deity whom the gods thought it fit to approach was Brahmā, the next deity was Śiva, and the third or last deity was Vishṇu. From this one may be led to surmise that before Vishṇu came into the field, Śiva is the Hindu deity who had held sway over the holy land of Gayā. It may be maintained indeed, without much fear of contradiction, that during the reign of the Imperial Guptas and immediately after Gayā proved to be a scene of a keen contest between Brahmanism and Śaivism resulting ultimately in the general admission of the superior claim of Śiva to reign over the place as its supreme lord. In other words, Śaivism became aggressive at this time over the entire region of Gayā, seeking everywhere to push Brahmā into the background and bring Śiva-Maheśvara into prominence.

With this contest at its height we have to close our survey of the reign of the Imperial Guptas, Śaśāṅka of Bengal and Harsha of Kanauj, and proceed to peep through the reign of some of the later Guptas and feudatory Maukharis, and watch how it became noted for the foundation of a stronghold of Vishṇu-worship at Aphsaḍ and the installation of the figures of Pārvatī or Kātyāyanī, a form of Śakti, in the Nāgārjunī hill-caves in the neighbourhood of the region of Gayā.

[1] *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, Ch. 84, verses 122-124.

From the later Guptas and the feudatory Maukharis we have to pass on to notice what happened in the region of Gayā during the pretty long and glorious reign of the Pālas of Bengal who exercised their sujerainty also over the ancient kingdom of Magadha. It is during the Pāla period that the final stage of the development of art and architecture, both Hindu and Buddhist, was reached. So far as Hinduism is concerned, one of the inscriptions clearly records the fact of installation of a figure of Śiva-Brahmā (*Mahādeva-Chaturmukha*) during the reign of King Dharmapāla by one Keśava in the precincts of the Bodh-Gayā temple of the Buddhists for the benefit of the erudite Śaivite Brahmin scholars who resided at Bodh-Gayā.[1] And as we have seen, there are a few other authentic epigraphic records to establish that the construction of most of the Hindu sanctuaries, the installation of most of the Hindu images and the excavation of most of the later Hindu sacred tanks, Uttaramānasa, Dakshiṇamānasa and the rest, were accomplished during the reign of Nayapāladeva, Vigrahapāla and Yakshapāla, which is to say, in the 11th and 12th centuries of the Christian era.

The installation of a peculiar representation in stone of Śiva and Brahmā in the form of a phallic symbol with four faces (*Mahādeva-Chaturmukha*) at Bodh-Gayā during the reign of Dharmapāla and that of a similar representation of the two deities (*Prapitāmaheśvara*) in the form of a phallic symbol with a human face in the heart of the Gayā town go to prove that some sort of a compromise between Brahmanism and Śaivism was arrived at under the benign rule of the Pālas of Bengal remarkable for their eclectic

[1] See *passim*.

spirit in the matter of religion. The aggressiveness of the Śaiva ascetics yieided its place to the humane spirit of Vishṇu in his form as Janārdana and the milder spirit of the same deity in his form as Nārāyaṇa, represented as the lord of Kamalā. The Sun-god, too, appeared on the scene of worship in a silent but conquering mood as Mauṇāditya and Vijayāditya. The preponderance was still enjoyed by the phallic representations of Śiva under the name of Sahasraliṅga, Dvistomeśvara, Phalgunātha and Kedāra. The process of iconic development continued, the temples after temples were added for the enshrinement of new images. And it may be easily imagined that the early history of the Hindu Holy Land came to be closed with the advent of Vishṇu in an awe-inspiring form, as Gadādhara or mace-bearer and the erection of the shrines for the worship of the different forms of Śakti. One of the inscriptions of King Aśokavalla of Sapādalaksha (Sivalik) hints at the decadence of Buddhism at Bodh-Gayā for want of royal patronage after termination of the reign of the Sena kings of Bengal. The iconoclastic fury of Islam must have a terrible effect on the shrines of the Gayā region, and particularly on Buddhism with the result that a time came when, there being no Buddhists to look after their own shrines and worship at Bodh-Gayā, the Brahmins of Gayā had to do their work even by going out of their jurisdiction. The sin of greed brought down curse on these Brahmins. Gayā ceased to be a land of plenty and prosperity, and its inevitable consequence was that its Brahmins became dependent for their livelihood entirely on an income from the pilgrims. Thus to save their souls a propagandist manual,

the later legendary form of the Eulogium of Gayā, became a desideratum. This Eulogium in the Purāṇas embodies the very latest phase of development of the iconic life of Brahma-Gayā under the strong and unquestioned sway of Vishṇu, the mace-bearer.

15. BODH-GAYĀ FROM BUDDHIST POINT OF VIEW

In dealing with the ancient tract of Uruvelā as a whole we had had an opportunity of inviting the reader's attention to a number of spots which acquired special sanctity in the estimation of the Buddhists from their association with the movements and achievements of the Buddha, both before and after the great Enlightenment. Here our endeavour will be to make an intensive study of the historical development of that remarkable spot in the neighbourhood of Senānī-gāma which was destined to be viewed and venerated by the Buddhists as the pre-eminent place of pilgrimage, reigned over by the lordly Bo. We might recall that this spot was nestled in a calm retreat within a few paces from the bank of the Nerañjarā of crystal flow and glistening beach and with a luxuriant frontage of a *Sāl*-grove. The selection of this very spot in preference to the Prāgbodhi hill and its fearful surroundings was no mere accident; it was a deliberate choice for the place had a special appeal to his imagination and proved peculiarly congenial to his temperament.

Obviously the city of Gayā through which he had passed had no attraction for him. That crowded urban areas like

the cities of Rājagṛiha, Benares, Vaiśālī, Kapilavāstu and Kauśāmbi had no fascination for him is too clearly borne out by the history of Buddhism. In all these instances we find that the sites selected for planting the centres of the new religion have always been pleasant woodlands and picturesque pleasaunces with open prospects and delightful surroundings as offered by the famous Deer-park at Ṛishipattana in the vicinity of Benares, the Bamboo-grove of King Bimbisāra and the Mango-grove of Jīvaka in the vicinity of Rājagṛiha, the magnificent woodland Mahāvana near Vaiśālī, the sombre Baṇyan grove adjoining Kapilavāstu and the Bhesakalāvana within the purview of Kauśāmbī.

All these premises may lead us to think that neither the crowded cities nor the dense forests and like other fearful places appealed really to his imagination or suited his temperament. Fa Hian and Hwen Thsang have left, almost in equal terms, an interesting description of circumstances that impelled the Buddha to avoid the dangerous crags and fearful forests of the Prāgbodhi hill (*Po-lo-ki-po-ti*), situated some four or five miles north-east from Bodh-Gayā, and to select the spot noted above. We feel tempted to quote below the description of Hwen Thsang as being the more effective one :

"To the east of the place where Gayā-Kāśyapa sacrificed to fire, crossing a great river, we come to a mountain called Prāgbodhi (*Po-lo-ki-po-ti*). Tathāgata after diligently seeking for six years and not yet obtaining supreme wisdom, after this he gave up his penance and accepted the rice-milk (of Sujātā). As he went to the north-east he saw this mountain that it was secluded and dark, whereupon he

desired to seek enlightenment thereon. Ascending the north-east slope and coming to the top, the earth shook and the mountain quaked, whilst the mountain *deva* in terror spake thus to Bodhisattva :

"This mountain is not the fortunate spot for attaining supreme wisdom. If here you stop and engage in the *samādhi* of Diamond, the earth will quake and gape and the mountain be overthrown upon you.' Then Bodhisattva descended, and half way down the south-west slope he halted. There backed by the crag and facing a torrent, is a great stone-chamber. Here he sat down cross-legged. Again the earth quaked and the mountain shook. Then a *Deva* of the Pure Abode (*Suddhāvāsa*) cried out in space, 'This is not the place for a Tathāgata to perfect supreme wisdom. From this south-west, 14 or 15 *li*, not far from the place of penance, there is a *Pippala* (*Pi-po-lo*) tree under which is a Diamond-throne. All the past Buddhas seated on this throne have obtained true enlightenment, and so will those yet to come. Pray, then, proceed to that spot.' Then Bodhisattva rising up, the Dragon dwelling in the cave said, 'This cave is pure and excellent. Here you may accomplish the holy (aim). Would that of your exceeding love you would not leave me.' Then Bodhisattva having discovered that this was not the place for accomplishing his aim, to appease the Dragon he left him his shadow and departed. The *Devas* going before, led the way, and accompanied him to the Bodhi-tree."[1]

As for the uncongeniality of dense forests and like other fearful tracts to his temperament, we have a much earlier

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records* Vol. II, pp 114-115. Cf. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. lxi-lxii.

and more authentic account in the Bhaya-bherava-Sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya. In connection with the suggestion that in the opinion of the Brahmin Jānussoṇi (Jānaśruti) the forest regions and arid tracts are highly difficult of habitation, the much-needed inwardness of self is hard of accomplishment, and equally difficult it is to find comfort in such loneliness, the forest, as it seems, distracts the mind failing to attain due composure, the Buddha is represented as emphatically endorsing it in terms as follows :—

Evam etaṃ, Brāhmaṇa, evam etaṃ Brāhmaṇa.

"Even so 'tis, O Brāhmaṇa, so 'tis." In the same strain he goes on to say that this very thought occurred to him prior to his attainment of perfect wisdom, when he had not as yet seen the great light and was still pursuing his career as Bodhisattva.[1] Further on, he gives out his reminiscences how he had spent there his days and nights in dreadful suspense.

"While I dwelt there (sometimes) a beast would be heard approaching, or a bird would drop down a dried twig, or the wind would ruffle the leaves. That would set me athinking : " There, forsooth, comes the very dreaded horror (*bhaya-bherava*). Then, O Brāhmaṇa, this thought occurred to me : A seeker of truth that I am, should I be caring for the fear (that is false). Now will I meet the awful foe as it comes from any position I may be in."[2]

In another *Sutta*, viz., the Mahāsīhanāda, he endeavours to show that he could willingly face all these apprehended

[1] *Majjhima- Nikāya*, p. 27 ; *Mayham pi kho Brāhmaṇa pubbe va sambodhā anabhi-sambuddhassa 'bodhisattass' eva sato etad ahosi.*

[2] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, pp. 20-21.

troubles only so long as he maintained to live up to the fruitless penances of the extreme ascetics such as the Śaivas and Ājīvikas.[1] To quote him in his own words:

"I used to live then, O Sāriputta, entering into a fearful woodland. That was indeed the most dreadful part of the dreaded woodland. Whoever, not free as yet from passions, dares enter such a tract, horripilation overtakes him all the more causing the hair of his body to stand erect. Throughout the autumn and winter months and even during the dewy first four days of the month following the winter-season I used to spend the night under the open sky and the day in the heart of the wood, while during the last month of summer I followed a reversed course, giving utterance to the following stanza of unprecedented fame:

So tatto, so sīno, eko bhiṃsaṇake vane |
Naggo, na ch' aggim āsīno, esanā-pasuto muni ||
"Bescorched, befrozen, alone in fearful wood,
Nude, no fire beside, all afire within,
Up and doing the *muni*, bent upon highest good."

It is clearly suggested in the Bhaya-bherava-Sutta that a dense and fearful forest generally suits those of dark mentality,[2]—the Śaivas and the Ājīvikas who find it difficult to cope with their own nature which is turbulent and rebellious, while to those who like the Buddha are of serene mind by their natural disposition the locality which appeals is a calm retreat with open prospects and delightful surroundings, neither in the heart of a crowded city nor at the same

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya* pp. 77-79, Cf. *Lomahaṃsa-Jātaka* (Fausböll, No.).
[2] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, p. 23: *avītarāgo avītadoso avītamoho, tasmā araññe vanapatthāni pantāni senāsanāni paṭisevati.*

time far from it. We have noticed how deeply impressed was the Buddha at the lovely sight of the village of Senānīgāma on his first arrival there and how most felicitiously he described his first impressions :

"Pleasantly picturesque is this part of land. Delightful is the sight of the grassy woodland. The river (Nerañjarā) is flowing on in a glassy stream, showing the bathing places with gradual descents of steps presenting a charming landscape, and affording glimpses into the neighbouring hamlets easy of access. This must needs be the fitting place for a scion of a noble race strenuously striving after the highest attainment."

The calm retreat in Uruvelā, finally selected and resorted to by the Buddha for his last efforts towards the realisation of supreme wisdom, is popularly known now-a-days by the name of *Bodh-Gayā*. The other term *Buddha-Gayā* which occurs for the first time in the apocryphal inscription of Amaradeva[1] has gained currency in modern literature, particularly due to its adoption as title for the classic of Dr. Rajendralala Mitra. The advantage of the rare name *Buddha-Gayā* over the popular is that it enables us to coveniently distinguish the area with the predominance of Buddha-worship from the Gayā proper which Abul Fazl, the court-historian of Akbar, calls *Brahma-Gayā*, meaning thereby a place of Hindu worship sacred to Brahmā.[2] But the popular name *Bodh-Gayā*, signifying, as it does, a sacred area predominated by the Bo-tree is more in accord with the earlier traditional name *Mahābodhi*. As attested by Cunning ham, the lofty temple at Bodh-Gayā continued to be known

[1] *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. I, p. 84. [2] Gladwin's *Ayin Akbari*, III, p. 25.

by the name *Mahābodhi* even as late as the year 1877.[1] Cunningham has succeeded also in showing that the Bodh-Gayā temple was known to Hwen Thsang as *Mahābodhi* (*Mo-ho-pu-ti*) *Vihāra* and the monastery by the name of *Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma*,[2] nay, that the same name *Mahābodhi* was used by all the Chinese pilgrims who visited the place in the 7th Century A.D.[3] The name of *Mahābodhi* also occurs in the inscription of Keśava recording the installation of a *Chaumukh Mahādev* during the reign of King Dharmapāla.[4] The same name is to be found also in the votive inscriptions of King Aśokavalla who reigned in the 13th century A.D.[5] Even coming to still later times we find that this name was current when Jinadāsa caused his votive record to be inscribed on one of the pillars of the old Stone-railing.[6] We need not be astonished at this. For the Eighth Rock Edict of King Aśoka bears clear evidence to establish that the holy site was known as far back as the 3rd century B.C. by the name of *Sambodhi*,[7] a term corresponding to *Mahābodhi* of the later inscriptions. Whether the term be *Sambodhi* or *Mahābodhi*, we cannot but admit that it primarily denotes the Great Bo-tree and secondarily the place of Buddha's Enlightenment, the far-famed spot where the Bo-tree lords it over. We mean that *Sambodhi* or

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 2.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol.. II, p. 133.

[3] IA, X, Beal's article on the *Pilgrims from China to India*.

[4] Passim.

[5] *Journal, Bombay Asiatic Society*, Vol. XVI, p. 359.

[6] Passim, Bk. III.

[7] Cf. the expression *ayāya Saṃbodhiṃ, nikrami Saṃbodhiṃ*, "proceeded towards Sambodhi." This is almost on a par with the Jātaka expression *nahāyitvāna Sambodhiṃ*, the term *Sambodhi* signifying *Bodhi* or *Mahābodhi-maṇḍa*. See the *Kāliṅga-bodhi-Jātaka* (Fausböll, No. 479).

Mahābodhi is the same term as *Bodhi* of the Barhut labels,[1] *Bodhi-vṛiksha* of Buddhist literature and *Mahābodhi-taru* of the Gayā-māhātmya.

Thus it is clear that Bodh-Gayā is essentially the spot of the Bo-tree, which is to say that the Bo-tree has lent its name to the sacred site. The tree is in reality but a lordly *Aśvattha* or *Pippala*, the Indian Fig. The Buddhist legends make it manifest, however, that the Bo-tree was not *Aśvattha* in all cases, the different Buddhas having different Bo-trees. Consequently, the proposition stands that the tree itself has derived its distinctive epithet from its association with the Buddha's signal achievement, the attainment of Buddhahood, the term *Bodhi-rukkha* being explained by Buddhaghosha as denoting a tree under which a Buddha attains Enlightenment. From this it follows that to view the history of Bodh-Gayā from the Buddhist point of view is to visualise the gradual process of geographical extension and enhancement of the historical importance of the spot of the Bo-tree.

Now the spot of the Bo-tree in its narrowest range has been known by the well-known name of *Bodhi-maṇḍa* or *Mahābodhi-maṇḍa*, a term signifying a terrace surrounding the foot of the Bo-tree. The Kāliṅgabodhi-Jātaka (Fausböll, No. 479) furnishes us with an artistic description of the Bodhi-maṇḍa and its surroundings prior to the advent of the Bodhisattva on this spot. As this Jātaka gives us to understand, the Bodhi-maṇḍa was just at that time a small

[1] Cf. Such labels as
Bhagavato Vipasino Bodhi. Bhagavato Vesabhuno Bodhi Sālo. Bhagavato Sākamunino Bodho.

silver-white sandy ridge around the Bo-tree with a radius of eight *karisas* and without a single blade of grass growing upon it. This was, then, encircled by the creepers with their serpentine courses and surrounded by a grassy woodland with the lordly trees inclining all towards the Bo-tree that stood on the central spot.[1]

The lordly *Aśvaltha* at the centre with a silver-white terrace of sand at its foot. The terrace a bare ground bereft of grass and approached on all sides by the encircling creepers with their serpentine courses. The *Aśvaltha* with the terrace standing in the midst of lofty trees with tops sloping towards the central height and marked out by a long vista opening out towards the east through an avenue of *Sāl* trees as far as the wide expanse of the glistening beach of the Nerañjarā of crystal flow. Yonder, in the immediate neighbourhood, stood the Neat-herd's Banyan, the Rājāyatana of royal fame and the Muchalinda tree growing on the bank of the Muchalinda lake, all redolent with living associations of movements and joyous ponderings of the Enlightened One. The river lively at mid-day with dancing steps of the mirthful Nāga damsels. The sombre site gay with carols of *Kalaviṅka* and other sweet-singing birds. The tree-tops swayed to and fro by the wind. The whole atmosphere arousing a sense of presence of the divinities and benevolent spirits.

Such is the spot of the Bo-tree with its natural surroundings which the Buddhists of later ages have invested with

[1] *Tadā kira aṭṭhakarisa-matte ṭhāne sasaka-massu-mattam pi tiṇaṃ nāma n'atthi, rajata-paṭṭa-vaṇṇa-vālukā vippakiṇṇā hoti. Samantā tiṇa-latā-vanappatayo Bodhi-maṇḍaṃ padakkhiṇaṃ katvā āvattiivā Bodhimaṇḍābhimukhā va aṭṭhaṃsu*

a mark of hoary antiquity describing it as *sabba-buddhānaṃ jaya-pallaṅka*, the seat of signal victory of all the Buddhas, the locality bearing the Diamond-throne seated on which 'all the past Buddhas have obtained true enlightenment, and so will those yet to come'. Such is indeed the remarkable spot which they have viewed and entertained as the navel of the extensive earth (*pathaviyā maṇḍo, pathavi-nābhimaṇḍala-bhūta- bhūmibhāga*),—the very centre of the cultured universe, unmoved, unshaken and unconquered for all times. Such is undoubtedly the great hold of the place on affections of the votaries of the Buddha ! And as for the Attainment itself, they have viewed it as so signal an achievement that every step towards it and every subsequent move therefrom have been extolled in the glowing terms of praise, rejoiced over, as though, by the whole of nature and the whole world of gods and angels.

It is on such a lovely spot of the Bo-tree that the princely ascetic Siddhārtha sat down at last cross-legged with his face turned towards the eastern quarter, determined to do or die, with a firm resolve not to move from his seat until he attained his goal even if his body withered away and his skin, bones and flesh underwent dissolution, even if the sky rent asunder or the earth left her fixed station (*nabhaṃ phaleyya, pathaviṃ chaleyya*). Thus this spot became primarily noted for the enthronement of a triumphant human will, and no less for the display of the undaunted moral courage to break away with the past tradition and the grand achievement of enlightenment of the human mind. Now we are to follow, step by step, the course of historical development of this thrice-blessed spot from the time of the

advent of the Buddha down to the eve of the Muhammadan conquest of Eastern India noting all the points of interest and importance.

To proceed with this onerous task we may observe at the very outset that the Buddha left the spot of the Bo-tree after the attainment of Buddhahood and the tract of Uruvelā after the conversion of the Jaṭilas never to revisit these places thereafter. This is not, however, to say that he actually did or could forget the happy reminiscences of the spots in Uruvelā redolent with historical associations of his great achievement, movements and ponderings. As a matter of fact, the Buddhist canonical texts speak of various occasions when he rejoiced to recount the experiences of the early days of his glorious career. While he lay on death-bed at Kusīnārā he specifically mentioned the spot of the Bo-tree recommending it in the following terms as one of the four memorable places worth seeing by a man of faith for inspiration :

Idha Tathāgato anuttaraṃ sammā-sambodhiṃ
abhisambuddho'ti, Ānanda, saddhassa
kulaputtassa dassaniyaṃ saṃvejaniyaṃ ṭhānaṃ.

"By reason of the fact, Ānanda, 'Here did the Tathāgata intuite the unsurpassed intuition of true enlightenment,' the place of the Tathāgata's enlightenment is worth seeing by a man of faith for inspiration."

And yet, strangely enough, there is no authentic record to prove that either in his life-time or during the two centuries following on his demise any one among his immediate followers and lay-admirers visited the spot viewing it as a place of regular pilgrimage. The present anecdote of the

Kāliṅgabodhi-Jātaka contains, no doubt, an interesting account of the planting of a Bo-tree in the compound of the Jetavana monastery or providing the lay devotees with a place of worship and that in the very life-time of the Buddha. But, as may be seen from the narration itself, the importance was attached directly to the Bo-tree considered as a living symbol of the Master's presence and only indirectly to the spot graced by it. We think it necessary to quote below the relevant part of the episode to enable the reader to form his own opinion about the actual fact :

"When the Tathāgata had set forth on pilgrimage, for the purpose of gathering in those ripe for conversion, the citizens of Sāvatthi proceeded to Jetavana, their hands full of garlands and fragrant wreaths, and finding no other place (*ṭhāna* or local symbol) to show their reverence, laid them by the gateway of the perfumed chamber and went off. This caused great rejoicings. But Anāthapiṇḍika got to hear of it ; and on the return of the Tathāgata visited Elder Ānanda and said to him, 'This monastery, Sir, is left unprovided while the Tathāgata goes on pilgrimage, and there is no place for the people to do reverence by offering fragrant wreaths and garlands. Will you be so kind, Sir, as to tell the Tathāgata of this matter, and learn from him whether or no it is possible to find a place for this purpose.' The other, nothing loth, did so, asking, 'How many shrines are there ?' Three, Ānanda ; 'Which are they ?' 'Shrines of a relic of the body, a relic of use or wear, a relic of memorial.' 'Can a shrine be made, Sir, during your life ? 'No, Ānanda, not a body-shrine ; that kind is made when a Buddha enters Nirvāṇa. a shrine of memorial (such as a Buddha-image, '*Buddha-*

paṭimā) is improper because the connection depends on the imagination only (*avatthukaṃ manamattakaṃ*). But the great Bo-tree used by the Buddhas is fit for a shrine, be they alive or be they dead.' 'Sir, while you are away on pilgrimage the great monastery of Jetavana is (*nippaccaya*, without a visible symbol), and the people have no place where they can show their reverence. Shall I plant a seed of the great Bo-tree before the gateway of Jetavana.' 'By all means so do, Ānanda, and that shall be as it were an abiding place for me. The Elder said this to Anāthapiṇḍika, and Visākhā, and the king. Then at the gateway of Jetavana he cleared out a pit for the Bo to stand in, and said to the chief Elder Moggallāna, 'I want to plant a Bo-tree in front of Jetavana. Will you get me a fruit of the Bo-tree.' The Elder, well willing, passed through the air to the platform under the Bo-tree. He placed in his robe a fruit that was dropping from its stalk but had not reached the ground, brought it back, and delivered it to Ānanda."

The anecdote proceeds further to narrate the details of ceremonial planting of the Bo-seed and miraculous growth of a full-grown Bo-tree and formal worship of the same, all combining to give rise to a new Bodhimaṇḍa at the gateway of the Jetavana monastery. Though the idea of its actual spot remained always bound up with the Bo-tree, primarily the tree itself was regarded as the living symbol of the Master's presence, and as such, the real object of Buddhist worship. But it does not appear from the narration that either the Elder Ānanda or the lay-devotee Anāthapiṇḍika desiring to instal the living symbol of the Master's holy presence went on pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā. The

errand which the chief Elder Moggallāna was commissioned to fulfil was just to fetch a seed of the Bo-tree. In point of fact, so far as recorded evidence goes, the word of the Buddha recommending the Bodhimaṇḍa as one of the four main places worth visiting by a lay devotee, full of faith, had remained just a pious wish till the throne of Magadha was occupied by King Aśoka of immortal fame. We mean that the task of giving practical and significant effect to the Buddha's word and actually raising Bodh-Gayā into a distinct place of regular Buddhist pilgrimage was really left to be accomplished by the greatest known Buddhist emperor of India.

His Gifted Majesty and Grace the King, when he had been consecrated ten years, went out to Sambodhi, the spot of the great Bo-tree, the place of Buddha's enlightenment. This fact has been recorded in the Eighth Rock Edict as the earliest and most notable instance of pious tours (*dharma-yātrā*) meant to be substituted for the thoughtless pleasure-trips (*vihāra-yātrā*) indulged in by the former kings. It might be shown indeed, say, for instance, on the evidence of the Vibhaṅga, the second book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, that the term *Sambodhi* was employed to mean just the totality of *bodhipakkhika-dhammā* or categories of the system of knowledge leading towards enlightenment. It might also be shown on the evidence of other texts that the term was employed in certain passages to mean nothing more or less than the enlightenment itself. We do not certainly deny that in the Vṛihat Svayambhū Purāṇa which is a comparatively modern Nepalese Buddhist legendary work of great authority Aśoka's phrase "went out to Sam-

bodhi" (*ayāya Saṃbodhiṃ*, *nikrami Saṃbodhiṃ*) has been interpreted as implying that the great Buddhist emperor intended to proceed towards Buddhahood or condition of enlightenment by following the Bodhisattva or Mahāyāna path. Reading, however, between the lines we can easily ascertain that in the account of the Buddhist Purāṇa, precisely as in the Buddhist edict, the intended meaning of the phrase is to be realised rather in the concrete. The idea of "a physical process," of pilgrimage to the actual place of Buddha's enlightenment, the spot of the Bo-tree, or to a shrine, such as the great Svayambhū temple at Nepal, commemorative of Buddha's great attainment is there. Further, as we have sought to show, the *gāthā* in the Kāliṅga-bodhi-Jātaka is conclusive as to the term *Sambodhi* meaning directly the great Bo-tree and indirectly its holy spot, the Bodhimaṇḍa.

So far as the first pious tour of King Aśoka is concerned, Sambodhi or Bodh-Gayā is the only place hitherto known to have been visited by him. And from his statement in the Eighth Rock Edict it does not appear that he set up any work of art at Bodh-Gayā to commemorate his visit thereto. The Rummindei and Nigāli Sāgar Pillar inscriptions go, however, to show that he undertook a second pious tour when he had been consecrated twenty years. At Lumbinī, known to him as the birth-place of the Buddha Śākyamuni, he set up a stone-pillar and some other work in stone (*silā-vigaḍa*), apparently to mark out the holy spot and commemorate his visit thereto. At Nigāli Sāgar, too, he set up another stone-pillar to commemorate his visit to a *stūpa*

[1] *Vṛihat Svayambhū-Purāṇa*, Fasc. I, Ch. 1.

of Buddha Koṇāgamana which he had caused to be enlarged six years back. The evidence of these two inscriptions seems to wonderfully tally with the Divyāvadāna account of his pilgrimage to all the then known sacred places of the Buddhists. The twofold object of the royal pilgrimage, as clearly stated in the Divyāvadāna, was to pay worship at the spots associated with the life of the Buddha and to mark each of them with a visible sign as a mark of favour to future visitors. The places visited by the king in course of this tour included Lumbinī, Bodh-Gayā, Sārnāth and Kusīnārā among others, Lumbinī being the first place of pilgrimage. The edifying legend expressly mentions that at each of these places the pious king set up a commemorative shrine and made an appropriate gift of money.[1]

If it can be established thus that King Aśoka went again on pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā, besides the gift of money, he may be expected to have set up a commemorative shrine standing as a permanent work of art and architecture. And taking clue from what he actually did at Lumbinī and Nigāli Sāgar, we can suggest that at Bodh-Gayā, too, he erected a monolith along with some other piece of artistic construction, both of which are unfortunately missing leaving us in a world of conjecture. Looking out for further light on this point we come across two important bas-reliefs on the Barhut stone-railing, one representing the famous scene of enlightenment of Buddha Śākyamuni. In both of these, prominently figures an Aśokan monolith distinguished by its round shaft and elephant capital, and in both, the monolith stands in front of the Bo-tree and just to

[1] *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 389 foll.

the north-east at a short distance from it. None can reasonably doubt that here we have a faithful representation of an Aśokan monolith at Bodh-Gayā or otherwise the stone-pillar would have shown an octagonal shaft and an ornamental bracket as an additional feature. Thus if any historical inference can be legitimately drawn from the Barhut bas-relief of the 2nd century B.C., it will be that at Bodh-Gayā, too, the Buddhist emperor erected a remarkable monolith surmounted by the figure of a standing elephant.[1]

As for the other piece of artistic construction, Hwen Thsang credits Aśoka with the erection of a small *vihāra* or temple in front of the Bo-tree, which was reconstructed afterwards on a larger scale. This tradition must not, however, be entertained without due caution. We cannot expect from Aśoka any more than a work in stone symbolising the Diamond-throne of the Buddha and serving as an altar before the Bo. And none need be surprised if the polished sandstone slab[2] appearing on one of the three *vajrāsanas* inside the present temple is the whole or part of the extra piece of work with which the Maurya king honoured the holy spot of the Bo-tree.

The Divyāvadāna further states that after his first visit to the Bo-tree King Aśoka became so much attached to it that it roused the jealousy of his then chief but wicked queen Tishyarakshitā who had a spell cast upon the tree to destroy it,—a calamity which could not have been averted without some difficulty. The Great Chronicle of Ceylon which substantially corroborates the truth of the above legend places the date of occurrence of this unhappy incident

[1], [2] Cunningham's *Stūpa of Bharhut*, Pl. xxx. 3.

definitely in the thirty-second or thirty-third year of Aśoka's reign.

An earlier but momentous incident is recorded in the chronicles of Ceylon and Buddhaghosha's commentary on the Vinaya-Piṭaka, namely, the ceremonial despatch by King Aśoka of a branch of the Bo-tree for planting on the soil of Ceylon. The sending of an envoy by the contemporary ruler of Ceylon to the Maurya emperor, the cutting of a branch of the Bo-tree, with roots, the return of the envoy with the graft, the great rejoicings of the king and people of Ceylon at the arrival of the awe-inspiring object of worship and the ceremonial planting of the same in the heart of the island are the important details vividly narrated with the joy of the poet's heart. As subsequent history bears out, even apart from symbolising the formal engrafting of Buddhism on the soil of Ceylon, the transplantation of the Bo-tree served to provide a living and growing symbol of friendship and cultural relationship between India and Ceylon ; nay, it served as well to entitle the Budddists of Ceylon to the unquestioned right of devoting all their energies and benefactions to the great cause of protection and glorification of the shrine of Mahābodhi, here in India as well as in their own island.

One may proceed thus to show how the entire historical process with the impetus given to it by King Aśoka went towards bringing the lordly Bo into high prominence as symbol of Buddhahood and special object of worship, heightening the glory of Bodh-Gayā as the Buddhist Holy Land and embellishing the sacred site with numberless votive offerings, all serving as so many spontaneous and

tangible expressions of the Buddhist faith. It is interesting to watch how within a century and a half from the reign of Aśoka the craftsmen or artists employed to execute Buddhist carvings on the Barhut stone-railing during the reign of the Suṅgas of Magadha helped forward this process.

We might observe that in delineating in stone various scenes from the life of the Buddha on the basis, more or less, of the current Buddhist legends supplied to them, the Barhut craftsmen skilfully employed their tools to produce the best possible work of art. In depicting the scene of Buddha's enlightenment they eventually got hold of their familiar and favourite subject, namely, the tree *Aśvattha* which they made to stand majestically at the centre in the symmetry of its height and the beauty of its foliage with a monolithic standard on its left side. The tree is surrounded by an ornate stone-railing, and stands garlanded with hanging wreaths, crowned with umbrellas, graced by the *Triratna* symbols, approached by the flying angels, watched by the tree-spirits and confronted by a pillared hall of worship with the cubical seat of the Buddha serving as an altar for offerings. The hall of worship is so devised as to make it appear also as a gate-chamber of the circular railing making an imposing entrance to the hall itself.

In another remarkable carving the Barhut artists have sought to produce a design of the Jewel-walk-shrine commemorating the spot on which the Buddha is known to have spent the second or third week after his Buddhahood by walking to and fro, from west to east. The shrine appears here as a long and open pillared shed with a gabled roof and several small pinnacles. Inside one can see a raised

platform with two rows of lotus-flowers, each of the flowers symbolising a footstep of the great Master. The platform shows on its front side the palms of human hands indicating its sanctity as an object of worship.[1]

There were probably other designs as well of the shrines commemorating other spots on which the Buddha spent the remaining five weeks. All of them are now irrevocably lost. The two designs which survive suffice to indicate that these (considered apart from the Aśokan monolith) are far from being faithful reproductions of any pre-existent shrines of the above description. These were intended rather to serve as patterns for future erections than to represent actual facts, and as such, their historical connexion lies with developments which rather followed than preceded.

We may now pass on to take note of the votive erections at Bodh-Gayā which were based on the imaginary Barhut designs and accomplished during the reign of one of these two neo-Mitra kings: Kauśikīputra Indrāgnimitra and Brahmamitra, both of whom appear to have been the immediate predecessors of Bṛihaspatimitra (Bahasatimita) alluded to in the Hāthigumphā inscription as a contemporary king of Magadha subdued by King Khāravela of Kaliṅga. The erections of which we have actual remnants comprise: (1) a sculptured Buddhist railing of sandstone of quadrangular shape (not circular as depicted at Barhut), serving as an enclosure for the Bo-tree; (2) a small pillared open stone-chamber built to the east and just in front of the original Bo-tree with a cubical Throne of the Buddha serving

[1] Cunningham's *Stūpa of Bharhut*, Pl. xxxi. 4.

as an altar, the whole stone-edifice standing as the first temple at Bodh-Gayā; and (3) a pillared open shed with a flat or gabled roof containing a high platform of brick with lotus-representations of Buddha's footsteps, the whole structure standing as the traditional Jewel-walk shrine (*Ratana-chaṅkama-chetiya*). As some of the old votive labels clearly indicate, the Noble Lady and Matron Kuraṅgi erected also costly retreats of royal fame, providing evidently for two monastic abodes, one for herself and other female devotees, and the other for the accommodation of the Buddhist monks,—the abodes perpetuating the memory of her husband King Indrāgnimitra and appropriately called *Iṃdāgimitrāsa rājā-pāsādā*.

All these structures, as far as we can ascertain in the light of the lingering old Brāhmī inscriptions on different parts of the ancient stone-railing, were memorable erections of the Noble Lady and Matron Kuraṅgi, wife of King Indrāgnimitra, Sirimā, a female attendant of the queen mother in her retired life, and Nāgadevi, wife of King Brahmamitra and probably daughter-in-law of Kuraṅgi. And as such, these stand as permanent and remarkable expressions of Buddhist female devotional piety. These were accomplished mainly on donations of Kuraṅgi. Fa Hian and Buddhaghosha writing their accounts in the 5th century A.D., speak of commemorative shrines erected by "men in after ages" (*pachchhimā janatā*) on all the sacred spots associated with Buddha's life. Seeing that the sandstone railing, the pillared shrine and the promenade are all erections of the same age, it may not be unreasonable to think that the pious lady Kuraṅgi did not stop short

at three constructions but constructed other shrines as well.

Four centuries later Fa Hian visited the famous site of Bodh-Gayā. He had not only witnessed the Bo and the memorial shrines erected on the earlier known sacred spots by men in after ages but figures of the Buddha as well, installed in those shrines for worship. He found, moreover, three *saṅghārāmas* in existence close by the spot of the Bo-tree, in all of which Buddhist monks were accommodated. These monks scrupulously observed the rules of the Vinaya with respect to decorum,—the rules which the holy congregation observed even during Buddha's life-time. The local lay supporters supplied them with all necessaries, so that there was no lack of anything.[1]

The Buddha-images alluded to by Fa Hian must have been added during the reign of the Kushāṇa kings and subsequently, and all before the reign of Chandragupta II. Of the three monasteries seen by him, one at least must have been a notable erection of "a former king of Siṃhala (Ceylon)."

Here we must note that Fa Hian does not give precise location of the three monasteries, while Hwen Thsang speaks of just one large monastery, the Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma which he locates outside the north-gate of the wall round the temple compound. The Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma, as noticed by Hwen Thsang had six halls, with towers of observation (temple towers) of three storeys. It was then surrounded by a wall of defence thirty or forty feet high, and tenanted by upwards of 1000 Buddhist priests who

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, p. lxiii.

studied the Mahāyāna vehicle in spite of the fact that they belonged to the orthodox sect of the Sthaviras: Hwen Thsang agrees with the earlier pilgrim when he says that the inmates of this monastery carefully observed the *Dharma. Vinaya*, and that their conduct was pure and correct. But certainly he differs from Fa Hian in according the whole credit to a former king of Ceylon for the erection of this magnificent edifice.[1]

"The position of the Great Monastery to the north of the Great Temple corresponds (according to Cunningham) exactly with the extensive mound known as Amar Sinh's fort. The lofty walls of the monastery, from 30 to 40 feet in height, would naturally have led to its occupation as a fort after the decline of Buddhism, in the 11th century................Buchanan mentions that the mound was called *Rājsthān* or the Palace, a name confined to the group of buildings at the north-west corner of the monastery enclosure. Other buildings at the north-east corner are also called *Rānivās* or the Rāni's Palace."[2]

Here perhaps lies the clue to a right explanation for the discrepancy between Fa Hian and Hwen Thsang as to the number of monasteries. It is easy to imagine that the name of Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma was applied by Hwen Thsang to designate indiscriminately the whole of the monastic abode which was occupied by the Theras from Ceylon, the Singhalese order of monks, and which comprised three separate groups of buildings, *viz.*, (1) the central edifice erected by the king of Ceylon, (2) the group of buildings at its north-west corner known as *Rājsthān*, the Royal

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 133. [2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 43.

Palace. and (3) the group of buildings at its north-east corner known as *Rānivās*, the Queen's residence.

The distinctness of the edifice constructed by the king of Ceylon for the accommodation of the monks and pilgrims from Ceylon is proved by the clear traces of its separate enclosure. As for the remaining two groups of buildings, these were situated outside this enclosure and at the north-west and north-east corners of the Ceylon monastery proper. And as regards the names *Rājsthān* and *Rānivās* by which the two groups of buildings were known as late as the time of Buchanan Hamilton, Cunningham thinks that perhaps these may refer to "the period of Amar Sinh's rule."[1] But we are inclined to think that for the origin of these names one has to go back to the inscriptions of the Noble Lady and Matron Kuraṅgi and her female attendant Sirimā alluding to the monastic abodes *Iṃdāgimitrāsa rājāpāsādā*, the Royal Palaces erected to perpetuate the memory of King Indrāgnimitra, one of them serving as a retreat for the monks and the other as a retreat for the queen herself in her retired life. The two abodes were comprehended and distinguished in the same term *Rājāpāsādā* precisely as the two groups of buildings in the common term *Rājsthān*.

It may be held almost as conclusive from the history composed by the Chinese writer Wang-Hiuen-t'se about the middle of the 7th century A.D. that Hwen Thsang's former king of Ceylon' was no less a personage than King Meghavarmā (or more accurately Meghavarṇa), and that Samudragupta was the contemporary powerful king (*mahāśrīrāja*) of Northern India to whom the king of Ceylon

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 43.

sent envoys with valuable presents for obtaining his permission to erect a monastery for the residence of Ceylonese pilgrims at Bodh-Gayā.[1] According to Hwen Thsang, the king of Ceylon sent just one pilgrim, a brother of his who took to monastic life, to visit the sacred places of Buddhism in India, and it is on his report that the king undertook to erect the monastery.[2] On the other hand Wang-Hiuen-t'se expressly says that King Meghavarmā sent two monks on pilgrimage, named Mahānāma and Upa-(?Upasena),[3] both of whom are mentioned in the inscription of Mahānāma II dated *Saṃvat* 269 (=587 A.D., interpreted in terms of the Gupta era).[4]

The story of Mahānāma I and Upasena as Ceylonese pilgrims sent to India by King Meghavarmā or Meghavarṇa would seem to have grown out of references to them in the inscription of Mahānāma II. It is difficult as convicingly shown by Dr. V. A. Smith, to establish the identity of Mahānāma I of this inscripition with Mahānāma, the author of the Mahāvaṃsa. Among the votive labels of the Bodh-Gayā stone-railing, there is one which records a rail-bar to be a gift from Bodhirakshita of Tāmraparṇi or Ceylon: *Bodhirakhitasa Taṃbapaṃnakasa dānaṃ*. This as well as two other rail-bars donated by Amogha and a Pāṭīhāraka could not have been added long after the construction of the stone-railing by Kurangi, Sirimā and Nāgadevī. Bodhirakshita is indeed the earliest known Ceylo-

1 The credit of bringing the passage in the writings of Wang-Hiuen-t'se to light is due to Prof. Sylvan Levi. See *IA*, Vol. XXXI, p. 194.
2 Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 133-134.
3 *IA*, Vol. XXXI, p. 194.
4 Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, pp. 277-278.

nese pilgrim to Bodh-Gayā. But judged by the alphabet and language of his votive record, he can by no means be regarded as a contemporary of King Meghavarmā-Meghavarṇa. If King Meghavarṇa had really sent any pilgrim or pilgrims from Ceylon during the reign of Samudragupta, they must be personages other than Bodhirakshita.

Whether all the Buddha-images seen by Fa Hian at Bodh-Gayā exist now or not and how many of them actually survive and how many do not are still a matter of conjecture. But there is one image which may be safely relegated to the later Kushāṇa or early Gupta age. This is in the opinion of Cunningham "the earliest figure of Buddha which has yet been found at Mahābodhi".[1] It bears on its pedestal an inscription of four lines which is written rather in the Kushāṇa style.[2] The Sanskrit of its text is not entirely free from such Prakrit forms as *upāsikāye*, *Arthadharmasahāyetiye*, and *sīharathā*. The image was installed in *Saṃvat* 64 (=142 A.D. or 382 A.D.) and during the reign of Mahārāja Trikamala. The work of installation was done by a Buddhist monk with the aid of a Buddhist lay woman named Arthadharmasahāyitrī. The image was set up in a shrine erected by a courtier of the king (*amātyadhuravihāre*). The inscription has for its concluding words such familiar Buddhist expressions as *Imenā Kuśala-muleṇā mātāpitṛiṇā (ṃ) pūjāye bhavatu* and so forth.

When Fa Hian passed through the city of Gayā it was desolate and deserted. At Bodh-Gayā, too, the great temple

1 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 53.
2 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, Pl. XXV.

had not then come into existence, and the sacred area with the growing shrines presented but a simple and decent show.

Two and a half centuries later came in Hwen Thsang to succeed in drawing up a mighty picture of the holy site and its immediate and distant surroundings, which is at once full of details excelling in the wealth of variety verging almost on clumsiness due to overcrowding. The picture left by him is, for all practical purposes, the same as that which we can imagine to ourselves with the aid of all that we may still see on the sacred site and all around. He has described the sacred area of the Bo-tree in no better terms than the following :—

"It is surrounded by a brick-wall of considerable height, steep and strong. It is long from east to west, and short from north to south. It is about 500 (?1500) paces around. Rare trees with their renowned flowers connect their shade and cast their shadows, the delicate *sha* herb (? *Kuśa* grass) and different shrubs carpet the soil. The principal gate opens to the east, opposite the Nairañjanā river. The southern gate adjoins a great flowery bank. The western side is blocked up and difficult of access. The northern gate opens into the great *saṅghārāma*. Within the surrounding wall the sacred traces touch one another in all directions. Here there are *stūpas*, in another place *vihāras* (temples). The kings, princes and great personages throughout all Jambudvīpa (India) who have accepted the bequeathed teaching as handed down to them have erected these monuments."[1]

Hwen Thsang saw not only the high wall of stone, the

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 115.

old Stone-railing, encircling the Bo-tree[1] and the Jewel-walk shrine to the north of the Bo[2] but the great temple at Bodh-Gayā as well, of which he has left a vivid description.[3] Among other notable objects noticed by the great Chinese pilgrim, the figures of two Mahāyāna deities, Avalokitésvara Bodhisattva and Maitreya Bodhisattva, installed in the niches like chambers to the right and left of the outside gate of the Bodh-Gayā temple deserve special mention.[4]

At the time of Hwen Thsang's visit the Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma entertained many Buddhist priests of Ceylon. To the south of the Bo-tree 10 *li* or so, the sacred traces were so numerous that they could not be each named. Every year when the *bhikshus* broke up their yearly rest of the rains, the votaries of Buddhism came here from every quarter in thousands and myriads, and during seven days and nights they scattered flowers, burned incense, and sounded music as they wandered through the Buddhist Holy Land and paid their worship and presented their offerings.[5] At this season of the year they visited also the Prāgbodhi-hill for the purpose of making religious offerings to the faithful, and departed after stopping there for one night.[6] It appears from Hwen Thsang's account as if the two tracts of Nadī and Uruvelā came under the sole sway of Buddhism.

The famous Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāma was engraved on a stone-tablet in *Saṃvat* 269, which, inter-

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 118.
[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 122.
[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 118-119.
[4] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 119.
[5] Beal' *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 135-136.
[6] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 115.

preted in terms of the Gupta era,[1] corresponds to A.D. 588-89. Its 'characters belong to the northern class of alphabets.' Its language is Sanskrit; and, except for the opening symbol representing *Om*, and for the date at the end,' it is 'in verse throughout.' The stone-tablet appears to have been 'originally set in a socket about three inches deep, and morticed at the sides into a building.' Mahānāma, the author of the inscription, has been introduced in it as Mahānāma II, a far-famed (senior) disciple (*śishya*) of Upasena II; 'an inhabitant of Āmradvīpa; a very ocean of a mighty family; born in the island of Laṅkā, delighting in the welfare of others.' Upasena II flourished in succession to Mahānāma I, who in his turn came after the saintly Upasena I. The last-named Sthavira succeeded Rāhula in seniorship, while Rāhula himself was just a disciple of the Śramaṇa Bhava. And Bhava saw the light of the day in long line of succession of disciples and disciples' disciples, born in hundreds, all upholding the tradition of the Saṃyuktāgama or Saṃyukta-bhāṇaka school and tracing their descent back to Mahā-Kāśyapa, worthy of praise.[2] The record is composed in high praise of an act of merit done by Mahānāma II in erecting a beautiful temple of the Buddha with an open pavilion on all sides at the exalted Bodhimaṇḍa or the site of the Bo-tree.[3]

[1] We are entirely at one with V. A. Smith (*IA*, Vol. XXXI, p. 197) in repudiating the Śaka or the Kalachuri era and in maintaining that the date 269 cannot be reasonably interpreted in an era other than the Gupta.

[2] Fleet has sadly missed the real import of the expression *Saṃyuktāgamino* in translating it: "endowed with a connected tradition of doctrine." See *Barhut Inscriptions* (Barua and Sinha's edition), note on *Bhāṇaka* for reasons why the disciples of Mahā-Kāśyapa are called *Saṃyuktāgamino*.

[3] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, p. 276: *sarvato maṇḍapena kāntaḥ prāsāda esha kārito.*

Along with this we may take into our consideration another inscription which records the presentation of a statue of the Buddha by a Sthavira named Mahānāma. Its characters are 'of precisely the same type with those of the preceding inscription of Mahānāma. Its language is Sanskrit and written in prose. Mahānāma of this inscription, precisely like that of the preceding one, is described as an inhabitant of Āmradvīpa (in the island of Laṅkā):

Om Deya-dharmmoyaṃ Śākya-bhikshoḥ
Āmradvipavāsi-Sthavira-Mahānāmasya.

"Om' This is the appropriate religious gift of the Elder Mahānāma, a Buddhist monk, an inhabitant of Āmradvīpa."[1]

Although opinions differ on the question of identity of the Mahānāma of Āmradvīpa who dedicated the shrine or temple with the Sthavira Mahānāma of Āmradvīpa who dedicated the image, there is a general agreement among the scholars as to the two documents being nearly contemporaneous.[2] Dr. Vincent A. Smith, in whose opinion the two documents are 'records not of one donor but of two donors,' inclines to believe that 'the dedication of the image is earlier than that of the temple.' To us the Mahānāma of one record is the same person as the Mahānāma of the other. The use of precisely the same local epithet *Āmradvipavāsi* raises presumption in favour rather of identity than of difference. The Mahānāma of the first document, although not expressly styled *Sthavira*, he is

[1] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, p. 279.
[2] *IA*, Vol. XXXI, p. 197.

ipso facto a Buddhist *sthavira* and omission is rather due to *metri causa.* Instances are not rare where in the same set of inscriptions the same person has been represented differently. In the Bodh-Gayā stone-railing inscriptions, for example, Kuraṅgi is described in some of them as *Ayā Kuraṃgi* and in some as *Iṃdāgimitrāsa pājāvāti Kuraṃgi.*[1]

We may endeavour thus to show that in somewhat less than two centuries after Fa Hian's visit the Elder Mahānāma II of Ceylon erected a beautiful temple for the installation of a Buddha-image on the exalted site of the Bo-tree, the temple which is different from the great temple at Bodh-Gayā. We have the dedication of two other Buddha-images at Bodh-Gayā by three other Buddhist monks of Ceylon, Dharmadāsa, Dharmagupta and Daṃshṭrasena, who appear to have come on pilgrimage to the holy site together with Sthavira Mahānāma II of Āmradvīpa. One image was jointly dedicated by Dharmagupta and Daṃshṭrasena, both of whom are described as *Tishyāmratīrthavāsika,* "residents of Tishyāmratīrtha":

Om Deya-dharmmoyaṃ Śākya-bhikshavos-Tishyāmra-tīrtha-vāsika-Dharmmagupta-Daṃshṭrasenayor.

"Om! This is the appropriate religious gift of the two Śākya bhikshus, Dharmagupta and Daṃshṭrasena residents of Tishyāmratīrtha."[2]

Tishyāmratīrtha is evidently a place in the island of Laṅkā, and Daṃshṭrasena, too, is just a Singhalese name. We are aware that the provenance of the Buddha-image bearing the inscription of Dharmadāsa is yet unknown.

[1] *Passim,* Book III.
[2] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum,* Vol. III, pp. 281-82.

But there can be little doubt that like Daṃshṭrasena, Dharmadāsa is a Singhalese Buddhist name. Further, the same wording of the inscription and the same characters cannot but lead one to imagine that Bodh-Gayā is the place where the image was installed by Dharmadāsa :

Om`Deyadharmmoyaṃ Sākyabhikshor Dharmadāsasya.

"'Om' This is the appropriate religious gift of she Śākya bhikshu Dharmadāsa."[1]

The dedication of these two images must have taken place along with the erection of two other shrines or temples, which, too, like that erected by Sthavira Mahānāma, were different from the great temple at Bodh-Gayā.

Hwen Thsang credits a Brahmin votary of Śiva-Maheś-vara with the costly erection of the Bodh-Gayā temple and his younger brother with the excavation of the tank with 'a flowery bank' on the south side of the great shrine, we mean, the tank now known by the name of *Buddhokhar* or *Buddha-pokhar*.[2] The Buddha-image enshrined in the main hall of worship is praised as the handiwork of a skilled Brahmin artist employed by the builder of the great temple.[3] It is said that the pious Brahmin obeyed just a holy communication from his deity Śiva-Maheśvara, the Lord of the Himalayan mountain, in erecting this temple to the Buddha.[4] The object of the undertaking was primarily but the fulfilment of a worldly desire, namely, his appointment to the post of minister to a reigning king. His wish was duly

[1] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, p. 280.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 119. Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 39.

[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 120.

[4] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 119.

fulfilled, although the account is dead silent over the name of the king.[1] While Hwen Thsang praises this temple as a most laudable erection of devotional piety of the Śaivite Brahmin minister, he is reticent as to the acts of destruction necessitated by the work of construction of the great shrine. In a somewhat different connection he mentions a few instances of destruction, such as the demolition of certain religious structures miscalled 'convents' and the cutting down of the Bo-tree, all of which are alleged to have been perpetrated as unholy acts of desecration by the wicked King Śaśāṅka of Bengal through envy, since he happened to be a believer in heresy, a staunch supporter of the religion of Śiva-Maheśvara.[2] "In late times," says the Chinese pilgrim, "Śaśāṅka-rāja (She-shang-kia), being a believer in heresy, slandered the religion of Buddha, and through envy destroyed the (?) convents and cut down the *Bodhi*-tree, digging it up to the very springs of the earth ; but yet he did not get to the bottom of the roots. Then he burnt it with fire and sprinkled it with the juice of the sugar-cane, desiring to destroy it entirely, and not have a trace of it behind."[3]

In the same connection he has extolled Pūrṇavarmā (*Pu-la-na-fa-mo*), the king of Magadha, as 'the last of the race of Aśoka-rāja' who, deeply grieved at the destruction of the Bo-tree, tried successfully, some months after the tragic and sudden death of Śaśāṅka, to bring the Bo-tree back to life, enabling it to grow anew from the roots that

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 119.
[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp 118, 121.
[3] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 118.

had yet remained after bathing them with the milk of a thousand cows. And when it grew to the height of some ten feet, fearing lest it should be again cut down, "he surrounded it with a wall of stone some 24 feet high." At the time of his visit the Chinese pilgrim found it encircled with a wall about 20 feet high (the length of the gateway pillars determining the height, no doubt).[1]

Hwen Thsang wants us to believe as if the great temple had been built long before the reign of Śaśāṅka and the sole purpose of Śaśāṅka in his coming to Bodh-Gayā was to establish the supremacy of Śaivism even in the very heart of the Buddhist Holy Land by ruthlessly destroying certain religious structures, cutting down and uprooting the Bo-tree and breaking the main image of the Buddha inside the temple. But in the same breath he informs us that the exquisite figure of the Buddha filled his heart with so much awe that he was compelled at last to abandon his iconoclastic project and order just the replacement of that image by a figure of Śiva-Maheśvara. The King's officer who was entrusted with this unholy work of humiliation of the statue of the Buddha skilfully managed to save the impending calamity by calling in the aid of a Buddhist devotee who raised a wall across the chamber to throw the Buddha-image into a dark background and drew a figure of Śiva-Maheśvara on this wall which was removed immediately after the death of Śaśāṅka.[2]

The simple-minded Chinese pilgrim has thus created a curious position for Śaśāṅka with regard to the Bodh-

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 118.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 121-22.

Gayā sanctuaries of the Buddhists. The erection of the Bodh-Gayā temple by a Śaivite Brahmin minister is praised as a great act of piety without paying any heed to the demolition, dismantling, destruction and removal of certain structures and shrines which it involved. While the credit of the costly erection is given to the Brahmin minister, the sin of desecration is laid entirely at the door of King Śaśāṅka. Similarly in the second instance the king is calumniated for issuing the unholy order and his non-Buddhist minister is thanked for divining a clever device to hoodwink his royal master. There must be something wrong somewhere. Three points are certain: (1) that the Bodh-Gayā temple appears to have been built at a date which is almost synchronus with the reign of Śaśāṅka; (2) that King Śaśāṅka did by no means contemplate to destroy this temple; and (3) that he did not cause any trouble to the inmates of the Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma. The historical truth behind Hwen Thsang's garbled account would seem to lie other way about. Anyhow, it is the pious builder of the great temple who must be held responsible for all the acts of desecration alleged to have been committed by the wicked Śaśāṅka. In point of fact, the most plausible way of making all the statements of the credulous Chinese traveller historically sound and truly intelligible is to presume that the powerful Śaiva Śaśāṅka is the benevolent king of Bengal under whose auspices and under the personal supervision of whose Brahmin ministers the great shrine at Bodh-Gayā was built, the *Buddha-pokhar* excavated, and the exquisite Buddha-image carved and consecrated. And what leads us to say so?

When the temple proper was built on a much larger scale, it had to be built precisely on a site in front of the then living Bo-tree. Before making any headway, as the very first step towards the building of the present temple, the site had to be cleared of the thorns and weeds and stumps, even not sparing the stump and roots and branches of the original Bo-tree if it was still standing upon it. Although a plan was made to accommodate the *vajrāsana* set up by Kuraṅgi leaving it where it was, the roof and upper halves of the pillars of the earlier small temple had to be demolished. The sandstone railing of Kuraṅgi had to be dismantled and removed. The erection of the great temple also necessitated the removal of the roof and southern row of pillars of the Jewel-walk-shrine. The monolith of Aśoka, too, had to be removed from its original place. If one is to locate the actual spot of the original Bo-tree, it must be done by looking for it under the basement of the present temple and just behind the ancient *vajrāsana*.[1] The whereabouts of Aśoka's monolith are yet unknown. But the ancient *vajrāsana* and lower part of the original small temple erected by Kuraṅgi still exist.[2] As actually witnessed by Cunningham during repairs of the present temple in A. D. 1818, the plinth of the earlier sandstone railing and the southern row of fixed pillar-bases of the Jewel-walk-shrine lie still buried and hidden under the basement of the great shrine.[3]

As for the original Bo-tree, it is impossible to believe

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 6 : "The position of the Bodhi-tree must have been inside at B, immediately behind the Vajrāsana throne (See Pl. II).

[2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, Pl. VI. See Book V, Fig. No. .

[3] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 5-7. See also Pl. II.

that it managed to keep itself alive for twelve centuries that elapsed between the Enlightenment of Buddha and the reign of Śaśāṅka, especially in view of the fact that the Aśvattha is not a long-lived tree. There may be some truth in the Buddhist legends stating that Tishyarakshitā, the wicked second chief-queen of King Aśoka, tried to destroy the original Bo-tree. If it be true that King Aśoka enabled the holy Bo to grow again, how can one reasonably believe that the same old tree was in existence and vigour of life as late as the 7th century A.D.? The only concession we can make to Buddihst legends is that efforts were made from time to time to maintain the living identity of the sacred tree by making it grow either from its stump, or from its branch, or from its seed.[1]

It is not difficult to imagine that the original Bo-tree died long before the reign of Śaśāṅka, although the withered tree was still obstinately standing on the spot. In clearing the site for the building purpose the withered tree had to be cut down at the very level of the ground, and its stump, too, had to be dug up and burnt to certain depth, and even the juice of sugar-cane had to be poured in to help the process of decomposition.

We may proceed in this manner to show that the alleged acts of desecration were but the unavoidable exigencies of the laudable work of construction of the great temple. If King Śaśāṅka be held responsible for these acts of destruction, he must at the same time be credited for

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 31 : "As the Pipal is a quick growing and short-lived tree, there must have been a long succession of fresh trees raised from seed, from the time of Aśoka down to the present day." The same observation applies equally well to the *Akshayavaṭa* of the Gayā city.

the construction of the important shrine. The great Chinese pilgrim recorded the facts as these were related to him. In this respect we do not doubt the veracity of his statements regarding the destruction of certain religious structures, the cutting down of the Bo and the throwing of the *vajrāsana* with the image installed on it into the background. But sacrilege was never the motive behind all these alleged acts of desecration. For looking to the other side of the matter we find that a good deal of pain was taken to spare the earlier constructions as far as possible. The ancient *vajrāsana* was with difficulty left where it stood before. As for the jewel-walk-shrine, the platform of brick bearing the lotus representations of Buddha's foot-prints was narrowly spared together with the northern row of ornamented stone-pillars.

With Hwen Thsang we may readily credit King Pūrṇa-varmā of Magadha for helping the growth of a new shoot of the Bo-tree behind the great temple and enclosing the same with a high wall of stone. It is easily conceivable that in improvising the later railing, the remnants of which have survived to the present day, King Pūrṇavarmā utilised all the available materials of the earlier sandstone railing dismantled at the time of construction of the present temple. The earlier railing being, however, insufficient for the extended plinth, substantial additions of granite stuff had to be made. The western half of the south side and almost the whole of the west side were filled with granite mouldings utilising the two corner-pillars of the earlier railing as if to make the later railing appear as a larger replica of the earlier one. One may also observe that the new railing was adapted

to the altered situation, being provided with gateways on all its four sides. But these boasted acts of piety on the part of the acclaimed Buddhist king Pūrṇavarmā were but a natural sequel to the erection of the great temple. To extol the great temple as a monumental erection of piety the sober historians must be prepared to readily excuse certain unavoidable acts of destruction. And strangely enough, the more we ponder over Hwen Thsang's story of Śaśāṅka and Pūrṇavarmā in relation to the Buddhist sanctuaries at Bodh-Gayā, the stronger grows our conviction that the decried Śaiva Śaśāṅka of Bengal is the benevolent king under whose patronage the Bodh-Gayā temple was built and the *Buddha-pokhar* excavated with a flowery bank.

'During the 7th century, as we learn from the Chinese records, there was frequent intercourse between India and China, beginning with the long sojourn of Hwen Thsang, from A.D. 629 to 642,'[1] and the Buddhist shrines at Bodh-Gayā were visited by a good many Chinese pilgrims. About the middle of the 7th century A.D., Wang-Hiuen-t'se composed his history of China referring to the interesting incident of despatch of the two Buddhist monks Mahānāma and Upa(sena) with valuable presents by King Meghavarmā (Meghavarṇa) of Ceylon as envoys to King Samudragupta of Northern India for the latter's permission to build a suitable retreat at Bodh-Gayā for the accommodation of the Ceylonese Buddhist pilgrims. It is apparently the famous Bodh-Gayā inscription of Mahānāma II which is accountable for the mention of Mahānāma and Upasena,

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 68.

none of whom was or could have been a contemporary either of Samudragupta or of Meghavarṇa.

In the 7th or 8th century A.D. some pious donor, as stated in a Sanskrit inscription engraved on the coping of the old Stone-railing, adorned the great temple at Bodh-Gayā 'with a new coating of plaster and paint at the cost of 250 *dinâras*.' In the temple itself he provided a lamp of *ghee* for the Lord Buddha 'by the gift of a hundred cows.' 'By another hundred cows, in addition to the cost of small perpetually recurring repairs to the temple,' he made provision for 'another lamp of *ghee* to be burnt daily before the image inside the temple.' 'By another hundred cows' provision was made 'for having a lamp of *ghee* before the brass image of the Lord Buddha (*raitya-Buddha-pratimā*).' 'A large water reservoir (*mahantam ādhāram*)' was dug up 'for the use of the noble congregation of monks.' And to the east of it a new field was laid out.[1]

We have another Sanskrit inscription engraved on the coping of the same old Stone-railing. This is a simple votive record in verse and its main historical importance lies in the fact that it immortalises the name of the distinguished Ceylonese pilgrim Prakhyātakīrtti, the virtuous Buddhist recluse of royal descent who visited the Buddhist Holy Land in the 7th or 8th century A.D., for the worship of the Holy Triad believing it to be the right royal way to the attainment of Buddhahood.[2]

The votive inscription of Udayaśrī, written in two lines on the pedestal of a Buddha-image, 'now kept inside the

[1] See Book III, *Uttara-Pāshāṇa-Lekhā*, No. 1.

[2] Book III, *Uttara-Pāshāṇa-Lekhā*, No. 2.

sculpture shed to the north of the (great) temple,' yields one more interesting record of Singhalese pilgrimage to the Buddhist Holy Land. The text of this inscription, precisely like the first two lines of the inscription of Prakhyātakīrtti, is composed in an *Anushṭubh* metre, and written undoubtedly in characters of one and the same age.[1] Another point of similarity between the two texts is that both are undated. None need be surprised if the pious monk Prakhyātakīrtti was accompanied by Udayaśrī who was evidently a Buddhist *upāsaka* or layman. The record shows that the Buddha-image, honoured as the Lord himself (*Bhagavān-esha*), was caused to be carved and installed by Udayaśrī, 'the Singhalese Udayaśrī.'[2] It may be easily inferred from a kneeling male figure holding the garland and a figure of a female with boy, both carved on the pedestal of the image, that Udayaśrī came on pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā together with his wife and son.

The whole of the Gayā region, north and south, was not so richly endowed at any other period of the early history of India than the Pāla. So far as Bodh-Gayā is concerned, "the great mass of the sculptures," says Cunningham, "belongs to the period of the Pāla kings, who reigned from A.D. 813." "In the sculptures of this period................there are numberless figures of the Buddha Śākyamuni sitting

[1] In the opinion of Dr. Bloch, however, the inscription of Udayaśrī is written in characters of about the 9th or 10th century A.D., while the characters of the ins-cpition of Prakhyātakīrtti agree with those of a record of the 6th or 7th century. See *Notes on Bodh-Gayā* in *Archæological Survey of India*, Report for 1908-9, pp. 156-157.

[2] *Kārito Bhagavān-eha Saiṃhalen-Odayśriyā.*

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 55.

under the Bodhi-tree............,...The figures of Padmapāṇi (Bodhisattva) are also numerous.

The dated specimens of these sculptures enable us to set them in a chronological order. There is one inscription recording the dedication of a statue of the Buddha during the reign of Śrī Gopāla-deva.[1] There is another inscription which records the installation of a Mahādeva-Chaturmukha (Śiva-Brahmā) in the Bodh-Gayā temple by a stone-cutter named Ujjvaḷa in the 26th year of the reign of King Dharmapāla, the son and successor of Gopāla-deva.[2] One of the remaining inscriptions happens to be a record of the time of King Nārāyaṇapāla-deva ,who was the fourth in descent from Gopāla."[3] Mahīpāla-deva, a king of the same Pāla dynasty, is eulogized in an inscription, dated in the 10th year of his reign' as *Parama-Bhaṭṭāraka, Parama-Saugata, Śrīman Mahīpāla-deva*, "the supreme sovereign, the pre-eminent Buddhist, the fortunate Mahīpāla-deva."[4] There is yet another inscription on a long slab, which is a short record of the reign of King Rāmapāla-deva whom the Tibetan historian Tāranāth mentions as the grandfather of the last Pāla king, named Yakshapāla·'[5]

It is probably during the reign of the Pālas of Bengal that the Buddhist king Śrī Pūrṇabhadra of Sindh erected a *gandhakuṭi* (temple) at Bodh-Gayā installing three Buddha-images therein[6] and another *gandhakuṭi* was erected, 'like

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 63 ; Pl. XXVIII.

[2] See article 17, *passim*.

[3] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 64.

[4] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 65.

[5] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 65.

[6] The inscription of Pūrṇabhadra which is engraved on the base of a Buddha-statue. *IA*, Vol. IX, p. 143 : Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 64-65.

unto a flight of steps into heaven,' by King Tuṅga of the Rāshṭrakūṭa family in the 15th year of his reign.'

The second great epoch of Chinese pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā commenced 'in the 11th century, during the most flourishing period of Buddhist sovereignty, under King Mahīpāla and his successors.'[1] Evidently these later pilgrims came in four or five batches, some during the reign of the great Han dynasty and others during the reign of the great Sung dynasty. They performed certain specific acts of merit and to that effect set up inscriptions, some of which exist only in fragments and some are lost for ever. These inscriptions are engraved on stone-slabs, of which the two sides are carved. One of these slabs has a sculptured top bearing a figure of the Buddha in the middle with a figure of the goddess Vajra-Vārāhi on each side. The figure of this goddess is seen also on another slab.[3]

The inscription of the Chinese pilgrim Chi-I shows that he was a priest of the great Han dynasty. He came twice to the kingdom of Magadha to gaze upon the Diamond-throne and other vestiges of Buddhism, each time in company with others. In his second pilgrimage he was accompanied by Hwei-tsei, Chi-I and Kwang-fung.[4]

The longest and most fascinating of the Chinese inscriptions at Bodh-Gayā is a votive record and hymn of praise set up by the priest Yun Shu from the Western river

[2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 66. The inscription of Tuṅga is aptly characterised as 'a long rambling farrago of the praises of the kng and his predecessors.'

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 68.

[2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 69 ; Pl. XXX, Fig. 1.

[3] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 74.

[4] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 75.

(Yellow river) of China. Yun Shu caused a stone-*stūpa* to be built in honour of the Ten thousand Buddhas some 30 paces to the north of the Bodhimaṇḍa. In his first visit to Bodh-Gayā he became associated with Chiang Hsia-pias, another Chinese priest who had come there earlier and on three occasions spent the season of fast. His inscription is dated in the Jen-hsu year of Divine favour of the great Sung Empire (A.D. 1021).[1]

The postscript to the above inscription clearly proves that Yun Shu was accompanied to India by the two priests I-ching and I-lin from the monastery of Established Doctrine in the High Street of the Eastern Capital, and became associated with them in his second visit to Bodh-Gayā.[2] I-ching and I-lin set up a separate inscription, dated in the 6th year of the reign of the Great Sung dynasty (A.D. 1029). It records that these two Chinese priests presented a gold-embroidered holy robe to be spread over the Diamond-throne of the Buddha, and erected a stone *stūpa* as well.[3]

The Chinese priest Yu-pin from the monastery of the commencement of Holiness in the Eastern Capital set up his record on the same date as that borne by the inscription of I-ching and I-lin. Yu-pin's recorded acts of merit are precisely like those of other two priests from the Eastern Capital.[4]

Lastly, the inscription of the Buddhist priest Hui-wen, dated in the 2nd year of Ming Tao (A.D. 1033), distinctly records that by commands of their Imperial Majesties, the

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 71.
[2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 71.
[3] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 71-72.
[4] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 72.

Emperor and Empress of the Great Sung dynasty he proceeded to the kingdom of Magadha to erect on behalf of His departed Imperial Majesty T'ai Tsung a *stupa* (Pagoda) beside the Bodhimaṇḍa, the Diamond-throne.[1]

The history of Bodh-Gayā after the Pālas is one of decadence of its glorious life. The Indian archæologists have hitherto brought to light three inscriptions of the reign of King Aśokavalla of Sapādalaksha (Siwalik), one of which is dated in terms of a year of the Buddha-era (*Buddha-varshe*), and the remaining two in those of two years of the expired reign of King Lakshmaṇasena of Bengal (*Śrīmal Lakshmaṇasenasya atīta-rājye*).[2] The inscription dated in the year 1813 of the Buddha-era contains a clear statement to the effect that at the time when it was written the religion of the Buddha fell into decay (*bhrashṭe Muneḥ śāsane*).[3] It remains yet to be decided as to whether the recorded dates, 51 and 74, of the other two inscriptions should be interpreted in terms of the era of Lakshmaṇasena which commenced from the year of his coronation or in those of an era of the same king which may be taken to have commenced from the expiry or termination of his reign.

We are aware that there exists a wide divergence of opinion among the scholars regarding the precise date of commencement of the era of Lakshmaṇasena. Dismissing as highly improbable all the theories advanced in favour of commencement of this era from a date prior to the reign of Lakshmaṇasena, one can say that the issue

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 70.
[2] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 343.
[3] *Journal, Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XVI.

has so far been as to whether the said era was started by King Lakshmaṇasena himself from the year of his coronation or it was arbitrarily started by the Hindus from A.D. 1200 representing the fixed date of establishment of the Muhammadan rule in India, as if to give currency to a new Hindu era running parallel with the Muhammadan.[1] Dr. Kielhorn[2] and the late Prof. R. D. Banerjee, in whose opinion the era commenced from the year of coronation of King Lakshmaṇasena, are disposed to accept A.D. 1118-19 as the date of its beginning. Both of them maintain that the dates of the two Bodh-Gayā inscriptions of the reign of King Aśokavalla are stated in terms of the era of Lakshmaṇasena which commenced in A.D. 1118-19.

If we render the recorded dates of the three inscriptions under notice in terms of the era of Lakshmaṇasena which commenced in A.D. 1119, the year of his coronation, we shall have to assign one inscription to A.D. 1170 (1119+51), the probable year of Lakshmaṇasena's death, another to A.D. 1188, and the third to A.D. 1193 (1119+74). All the three dates thus derived make the inscriptions appear as records prior to the invasion of Magadha by Bukhtyer Khilji. The difficulty in accepting such a rendering as this is twofold : (1) that it does not fully explain the significance of the expression *atīta-rājye*, 'in (the year of) the expired reign' ; and (2) that it does not satisfactorily explain why in one of these three inscriptions there should occur the statement about the sudden decay of the religion of the Buddha. We require a rendering which removes this twofold difficulty

[1] R. D. Banerjee's *Bāṅgālār Itihās*, Part I, pp.

[2] *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, pp. 6-10, 27-30. *IA*, Vol. XIX, p. 1.

and assigns the three inscriptions to dates posterior to Bukhtyer's invasion of Magadha and ruthless destruction of the Hindu and Buddhist sanctuaries all over the ancient kingdom. The Mahābodhi Saṅghārāma was tenanted up till the reign of the Pālas by the Ceylonese monks. As a matter of fact, the sanctuaries at Bodh-Gayā remained till that time under the direct supervision of these monks. So long as they remained in charge of the shrines at Bodh-Gayā, no pilgrim, whether from China or from Sindh, appears to have described himself openly in the votive record left by him as a follower of the Mahāyāna system (*Mahāyāna-yāyī*). But in all the three records of the reign of King Aśokavalla, the donors and their royal patrons have been mentioned as the Mahāyānists by faith. From the second inscription, dated in the year 1813 of the Buddha-era, it is evident that the building work was supervised not by a Ceylonese monk but by Dharmarakshita, a renowned Buddhist teacher of the country of Kamā (? Kumāyun). We cannot but think that the decay of the religion of the Buddha was chiefly due to a terrible effect of the iconoclastic fury of the Islamic forces under Bukhtyer that expressed itself in a pronounced form all over Magadha. As for Bodh-Gayā, it sounded death-knell to its otherwise growing shrines and sanctuaries. The temples were broken down, the images suffered mutilation, the *saṅghārāma* was razed to the ground, and the Singhalese monks who permanently resided at the place must have fled away in panic, if their lives were spared at all.

The natural meaning of the expression *Lakshmaṇasenasya atīta-rājye saṃ* 74 is that the inscription containing this

expression was written in the year 74 counted from the date of expiry or termination of the rule of Lakshmaṇasena, we mean, from *circa* A.D. 1170. Adding 51, 69 and 74 to 1170, we can fix up the dates of the three inscriptions respectively as A.D. 1221, A.D. 1239, and A.D. 1244.

In the first inscription, dated in the year 51 of the expired reign of King Lakshmaṇasena, King Aśokavalla is represented as 'an adherent of the excellent Mahāyāna school, a great *upāsaka*, pious at heart.' Moved thereto by the Kashmir Pandit, the honoured Chaṭṭopadhi, by the king's Pandit Mushala, the worthy Śaṅkaradeva, and the worthy Trailokyabrahma, the illustrious king built a monastery for Bhaṭu Dāmodara, Bhaṭu Paima, Śiśu Rāghava and Mahipukha, and furnished it with an image of Buddha. He engaged the cook Māmaka, and the good keeper and disposer Harichandra to prepare the daily rations with pots, incense and lamps as a befitting offering to the Buddha-image.[1]

The second inscription, dated in the Buddhist year 1813, is a lengthy royal panegyric (*praśasti*) composed 'in a great hurry' by Indranandi, a writer of high fame, and beautifully incised on a stone-tablet by the engraver Rāma. It is written in praise of King Purushottamasiṃha of Kamā (? Kumāyun) and King Aśokavalla of Sapādalaksha, both of whom combined in giving a fresh impetus to the life of the Buddhist Holy Land which fell into decay. King Purushottamasiṃha, who was a feudatory chief under King Aśokavalla, is introduced as the son of King Kāmadevasiṃha and grandson of King Jayatuṅgasiṃha of Kamā, a prosperous country

[1] *Journal, Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XVI, p. 359.

which is said to have been situated 'towards the eastern part.' Here Aśokavalla is praised as an 'Indra-like Chhinda king,' which may be taken to establish that he belonged to the powerful Chhinda family exercising sovereignty also over the country of Sindh. The inscription records the construction of a *gandhakuṭi* of Buddha at Bodh-Gayā, 'graceful and like a hall of emancipation and bliss,' for the spiritual benefit of Māṇikyasiṃha, the deceased son of Ratnaśrī, the daughter of King Purushottama. The whole work of construction of this beautiful temple was supervised by Dharmarakshita, a saintly Buddhist teacher.[1]

The third inscription, dated *Saṃ* 74 of the expired reign of Lakshmaṇasena, and found by Mr. Hathorne near the great temple, is nothing but a record of a meritorious gift of Śrī Sahaṇasāna, son of Mahataka Śrī Mṛisibrahma. The donor Sahaṇasāna is described as 'a follower of the excellent Mahāyāna school, a great worshipper, a lamp of the assemblies of Kshattris.' He is mentioned also as 'a treasurer and dependent of Prince Daśaratha,' the younger brother of King Aśokavalla. The interest of this particular record lies also in the fact that in it King Aśokavalla is extolled as 'lord of the Khaśa kings of the Sapādalaksha mountains.'[2]

We have yet to take note of another Sanskrit inscription written in characters showing that it was a Mahāyānist record of the same age as those of the reign of King Aśokavalla.[3] This inscription is engraved 'on the base of a life-size image of Buddha, standing, attended by Avalokiteśvara

[1] *IA*, Vol. X, pp. 341 foll.; Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 79-80.
[2] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 346.
[3] In Bloch's opinion the characters are 'of about the 10th century A.D.'

and Maitreya,'—the statue which is 'now in the staircase leading up to the platform of the temple, on the northern side.' Even apart from the figures of the two Mahāyāna deities Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, we have the clear evidence of the text itself to prove that its author, the senior monk Vīryendra, was an adherent of the Mahāyāna system of faith. Further, the inscription clearly proves that the donor of the gift was a pilgrim from the great monastery of Somapura and an inhabitant of Samataṭa, a tract which formed a part of ancient Bengal. The first three lines of the text read :

Sri-Sāmataṭikaḥ pravara-Ma-
hāyāna-yāyinaḥ Srimat-Somapura-mahā
vihārīya-vinayavit-Sthavira-Vīryendrasya.(1)

"(Gift) of the senior monk Vīryendra, a knower of the Vinaya and an inmate of the great monastery of Somapura, an inhabitant of Samataṭa country and a follower of the excellent Mahāyāna system."[1]

It is, then, during the benign rule of the earlier Pathan kings in India that some new structures were built at Bodh-Gayā under the auspices of King Aśokavalla for the first time after the ruthless destruction of the sanctuaries by Bukhtyer Khilji. It is indeed during the palmy days of the Pathan rulers of India that the decadent life of the art and architecture of Bodh-Gayā flickered once more before its final extinction in the 16th century. The larger and earlier Burmese inscription clearly proves that in the beginning of the 14th century the ruinous condition of the Bodh-Gayā

[1] See for the text and translation Bloch's *Notes on Bodh-Gayā* in *Archæological Survey of India*, Report for 1908-9, p. 158.

temple attracted the attention of the then reigning powerful king of Upper Burma, who in all seriousness took steps to have it restored and repaired.

This Burmese inscription is incised on 'a black stone, which is fixed in one of the walls of the Mahanth's residence,' and there exist as many as three translations of its text, one published by Ratnapāla,[1] another by Col. Burney,[2] and the third by Mr. Hla Oung.[3] The king of Upper Burma is honoured in this precious document as *Theinpyu-Thakintara-Mingyi* or the lord of 100,000 Pyus,' a fact which attests that up till that time the Pyus of Upper Burma had not become extinct as a race. The same fact goes also to connect the pious lord of the white elephant with the ancient dynasty that reigned in the city of Pagan.[4]

The inscription records that the pious king deputed at first his royal preceptor Sri-Dharmarājaguna to repair the great temple, providing him with sufficient money to do the work. Sri-Dharmarājaguna, who was accompanied by his pupil Kāthaba Thera (Kassapa Thera), proved unsuccessful in his attempt to accomplish the task. Thereafter His Majesty entrusted the task to the younger prince Pyu-Thakin and the minister Ratha, both of whom came across to India to repair the sacred edifice (in company, as it seems, with Thera Wardathi or Varadassi). The work was commenced on Friday the 10th day of the waxing moon of the *Pyatho* month in the year 667 (of the Burmese era,

1 *JASB*, Vol. III, p. 214. 2 *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XX, p. 164.

3 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 76.

4 It may be noted in his connexion that King Htilo Minlo of Pagan is known as the historical builder of the Mahābodhi Pagoda in the city of Pagan on the model of the great temple at Bodh-Gayā.

Sakkarāja , and completed on Sunday the 8th day of the waxing moon of the *Tazoungmon* month in the year 668 of the same Burmese era. The work was duly consecrated with splendid pomp and appropriate offerings of various kinds including the offering of food to the poor and destitute who were as if they were His Majesty's own children.[1]

The old Stone-railing now contains a few granite pillars presenting certain lotus-medallions in the middle row with the male and female figures quite Burmese in their headdresses and appearances, and certain representations of the *stūpas* of Burmese models in the upper row It is likely that in carrying out the repairs of the great temple the deputies of the king of Upper Burma thought it necessary also to repair the damaged parts of the Stone-railing. The basalt throne of the Buddha inside the great temple appears equally to have been an addition made by the Burmese deputies.

'A brick with a short Burmese inscription' was found built into the pinnacle along with several other bricks bearing (in Bengali characters, the names of the two) masons.' —Gopapāla and Dharmasiṃha.[2] It would seem that these inscribed bricks are relics of the last Burmese repair of the great temple made under the auspices of Ming-don-min, the king of Ava, or some other predecessor of King Thibaw.

The year 667 of the Burmese era corresponds with A.D. 1305, and the year 668 with A.D. 1306.[3] We cannot but differ from Cunningham when he arbitrarily proposes to

1 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 76.
2 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, Pl. XXIX. 3.
3 Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*; p. 76.

correct these two dates in the inscription to 441 and 448 respectively, making the former to tally with A.D. 1079 and the latter with A.D. 1086.[1] It will be simply doing violence to the historical truth to adopt such a wrong procedure as this, especially having regard to the fact that the document is intended to be precise even in the minute details of chronology. We detect, however, that Cunningham was led to this course in order to harmonise the date of this Burmese inscription with that of an inscription of Śrī-Dharmarājaguru, which he wrongly took to be a somewhat earlier Burmese record.[2]

The second inscription is a much shorter record, which is engraved 'on a large copper-gilt umbrella, and found by Mr. Beglar under the Burmese ground level to the west of the temple.' The umbrella actually bears two short inscriptions, one in Mön or Talaing (not in Burmese, as hitherto supposed), and the other in Indian (proto-Bengali), characters. The Talaing inscription consists of one short line and injured by a break in the middle. The Indian inscription consists of two lines, of which the upper one is much injured on the right hand.' The legible portion of the Indian inscription may be taken to yield the following text:

Saṃ 397 *Sri-Dharmarājaguru-mahāvala-dānagani* .... *Rāñño Sahadevindasyātrajaḥ.*[3]

With regard to this shorter inscription, Cunningham appears to have committed a twofold mistake: (1) in inter-

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 77.

[2] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 75.

[3] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, p. 75—suggests such reading as *Sri-rāno Sahadena*.,.

preting the recorded date *Saṃ* 397 in terms of the Burmese era, and (2) in assuming Śrī-Dharmarājaguru of this record to be the same personage as Śrī-Dhammarājaguna of the larger Burmese inscription. The commonness of the official designation does not necessarily prove the identity of the persons who bear it. Here *Srī-Dhammarājaguna* or *Śrī-Dharmarājaguru* is but an official designation. As for the date of the inscription, it is difficult to interpret the word *Saṃ* or *Saṃvat* in the sense of *Sakkarāja*, which latter is a convention of Burma to denote the Burmese era. We maintain that the donor of the copper-gilt umbrella is altogether a different person, as well as that the recorded date *Saṃ* 397 is either a clerical mistake for *Saṃ* 1397 or a statement in terms of a year of the expired reign of King Lakshmaṇasena. In either case, the copper-gilt umbrella inscription is later than the larger Burmese record, and belongs to A.D. 1340 (*Saṃ* 1397 being = *Vikrama Saṃ* 1397) or to A.D. 1567 (1170 + 397), which is to say that the second Śrī-Dharmarājaguru visited Bodh-Gayā sometime after the repair of the great temple by the king of Upper Burma. The Mön or Talaing record appearing on the copper-gilt umbrella is in itself a cogent proof to establish that the second Śrī-Dharmarājaguru was a Mön or Talaing by race and belonged probably to Lower Burma.

The last cycle of Buddhist pilgrimage to Bodh-Gayā from different parts of India commenced in the beginning of the 14th century, while India was still under the suzerainty of the Pathan rulers. We have a large number of inscriptions on stone-slabs, two of which are dated in *Saṃ* 1359, a third in *Saṃ* 1365, a fourth in *Saṃ* 1385 and a fifth in *Saṃ* 1388.

Though the rest do not bear dates, their general contents and convention leave no room for doubt as to their being records of the same age. In each of the two inscriptions, dated *Saṃ* 1359, the pilgrim offers his adoration to Mahābodhi for the benefit of his parents, and the two records are worded in almost the same terms. In the third inscription dated *Saṃ* 1365, the pilgrim similarly records his devotion at Mahābodhi. On the stone-slab bearing the inscription, dated *Saṃ* 1385, there appear 'five figures (three male and two female), all kneeling in the Burmese fashion and holding out offerings of flowers to a *stūpa*,'[1] the most prominent man being labelled *Kara(śa)ka ṭhākura Śrī*.................., "Ṭhākura so and so, a man of Karaśa," and his wife kneeling behind him being named *Thākurā(ṇi) Jājorā (De)v(i)*. One of the remaining labels has for its first word *Karaśakā*,[1] a feminine form of the local epithet. The other slab bearing the date of *Saṃ* 1388 presents 'four figures, three male and one female, all kneeling and offering flowers.'

With the last-named two slabs may be associated a third which bears 'two figures, man and wife, the former labelled *Rāchrā* and the latter *Siṅgāra Dabu*,' and also a fourth bearing 'three figures, a man, a woman, and an animal (very like a dog),' the man being labelled *Sundaravarmā*, the woman *Nāgaladevi* and the animal *Bhutamāna*.'[1]

The local epithet *Karaśaka*, 'a man of Karaśa,' or *Karaśakā*, 'a woman of Karaśa,' which occurs in some of the labels is historically important as showing beyond doubt

[1] *Archæological Survey of India*, Vol. I, Pl. VI. The local epithets *Karaśaka* and *Karaśakā* are brought to light here for the first time. Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 82-83.

that these latter-day Buddhist pilgrims hailed from Karaśa, probably a locality in the Punjab or Sindh. The influx of the Ṭhākuras or Ṭhakkuras as pilgrims to the region of Gayā from the Punjab or Sindh at this very period of time is proved by the inscription of Ṭhakkura Śrī-Kulachandra, son of Siṃharāja and grandson of Dālarāja, found at the city of Gayā and dated in the Vikrama Saṃvat 1431 (=A.D. 1374). The form of his name leads Dr. Bhagawanlal Indraji to conjecture that 'he may have been a Ṭhakkura of some place in the Punjab or Sindh.' The inscription clearly proves that Ṭhakkura Kulachandra 'repaired the fallen temple of the Lord, the worshipful Dakshiṇāditya' near the Vishṇupada temple at Gayā in A.D. 1374 and during the reign of Feroz Shah Tughlak. In style the Sun-temple 'resembles the temples of Mahābodhi and Tārādevī,' and in point of fact it was rebuilt in its present form with materials brought over from the ruins at Bodh-Gayā, the materials including the stone-tablet bearing the second inscription of the reign of King Aśokavalla.[1]

Along with the above-mentioned records of Buddhist pilgrims from the North-Western regions of India we may, perhaps, consider the inscription of Paṇḍita Jinadāsa, engraved by Saṃgatta on a pillar of the old Stone-railing. Paṇḍita Jinadāsa hailed from a country, called Parvata.[2] In all probability the Parvata of this votive record is no other than the country of *Po-fa-to* (Parvata) which was reached by Hwen Thsang after walking a distance of 700 *li* or so north-east from Mūlasthāna or Multan. Two other

[1] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 341.
[2] Book III, *Uttara-Pāshāṇa-Lekhā*, No. 3.

pillars of the same old Stone-railing still bear stylo-sketches of the figures of Buddha and the goddess Tārā, which cannot but be the fancy carvings of some of the pilgrims from the country of Parvata, and presumably of Saṃgatta who engraved the record of Jinadāsa. Abul Fazl, the historian of Akbar's court, wrote his Aini-Akbari in the 40th year of the reign of his imperial master. His information is that Buddhism was nowhere to be found in India but in Kashmere, where, too, it was difficult to meet a learned representative of this religion. Tibet, Tenasserim (Lower Burma) and Dhañasiri (? Arracan) are mentioned as three distant corners of the earth where Buddhism held ground as a living faith of the people. We are completely in the dark as to the source of such an information as this. It is quite possible that Bodh-Gayā was visited during Akbar's rule by some Buddhist pilgrims from those three places. Śrī-Dharma-rājaguru, the donor of the copper-gilt umbrella at Bodh-Gayā, may have been one of those pilgrims, should our interpretation of the recorded date *Saṃ* 397 in terms of a year of the expired reign of Lakshmaṇasena be sound.

With the votive constructions and offerings of Buddhist pilgrims from Burma, Upper and Lower, and the North-Western regions of India the flickering life of the art and architecture of Bodh-Gayā extinguished for ever, and the holy site passed out of the hands of the Buddhists. Bodh-Gayā as a dreamland of the Buddhists sank into oblivion till its cause was vigorously espoused in the last century by the Mahābodhi Society of Ceylon with the Anagarika Dharmapala as its General Secretary, leader and lieutenant.

In closing this hurried survey we may draw the reader's attention to the periodicity of pilgrimages and the time-spirit, which must not be lost sight of in accounting for the uniformity of styles and conventions noticed in the different sets of records. We might, for instance, observe that in the first wave of Chinese pilgrimage all those who visited Bodh-Gayā (Fa Hian, Hwen Thsang, and the rest) recorded what they saw in their travels instead of setting up any votive inscriptions and hymns of praise in the manner of the later pilgrims representing the second wave (Yun Shu, Chiang Hsia-Pias, I-chin, I-lin, and the rest). Similarly we may observe that the earlier batch of Ceylonese pilgrims (Mahānāma and others) left inscriptions written in one kind of style and those forming the second batch (Prakhyātakīrtti and Udayaśrī) set up inscriptions written in a different style. We must have also noticed that all the inscriptions which may be relegated to the reign of King Aśokavalla are so many Mahāyānist records written in a uniform style. And the same remark applies equally well to the votive records of the Ṭhākuras from the Punjab or Sindh. It is sure to pain one to think that the archives of Bodh-Gayā should appear conspicuous by the absence of any records of visits or meritorious deeds of the pilgrims from Siam and Tibet, Korea and Japan.

16. BODH-GAYĀ FROM HINDU POINT OF VIEW

To survey the history of Bodh-Gayā from the Hindu point of view is to witness how from the very beginning it presented a scene of struggle between Śaivism and Buddhism. So far as Śaivism is concerned, this struggle was rather for the

assertion of right to existence than for the establishment of supremacy. The verdict of the historian is bound to be this that throughout this age-long struggle the Śaiva has generally been on the defensive and only occasionally on the aggressive. In other words, the purpose of the present article is to show what apology Śaivism actually had and still has for being where it is.

Buddhaghosha has utilised a legend invented by the Buddhists to account for the growth of Uruvelā into a sandy tract. In spite of the fantastic character of the legend, it may be cited here to show that even in Buddhist belief long before the advent of the Buddha the region was once hallowed by the religious rites and austere penances of a class of Vedic hermits, legion in number,[1] who may be rightly described as precursors of our much-acquainted matted-hair Jaṭilas. The stage in which these old-world hermits are made to appear points to a time when they had not as yet developed a sense of corporate life under a commonly acknowledged leader, everyone doing his work in his own way without waiting for the dictation of anybody else.[2] The legend seeks to keep these hermits distinct from the Jaṭilas by representing them as a body of *religieux*, far more ancient, observing the particular solemn ceremony, the *Kṛittikā-vrata*, connected with the asterism *Kṛittikā*[3] (the *Pleiades* of western astronomy) constituting the first constellation of the Lunar Zodiac,—a holy rite so exuberantly extolled in the Brāh-

[1] *Papañcha-sūdani*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 232: *Atīte kira anuppanne Buddhe dasasahassa-kulapattā tāpasa-pabbajjaṃ pabbajjitvā tasmiṃ padese viharantā.*

[2] *Papañcha-sūdani*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233: *tassa añño chodako nāma n'atthi.*

[3] *Papañcha-sūdani*, Siamese Ed, Part II, p. 232; *Kattikavattaṃ akaṃsu.*

maṇas, especially in the Śatapatha.[1] The legend distinctly says that the tradition of such an observance by these ancient hermits furnished the pious posterity with a good excuse for commemorating it by demarcating the site, fencing it round, and raising it into a place of special sanctity.[2]

Leaving aside these ancient Vedic hermits who had no rival to encounter, we may come down to the historical period and witness how just prior to the rise of Buddhism and at the time of Buddha's enlightenment the distinguished body of the Jaṭilas, the predecessors of the Śaiva ascetics, were holding unquestioned sway over the region of Uruvelā,[3] unmindful of what was portended by the appearance of a new star on the horizon. Their hearth and home was the hermitage (*assama*) overlooking the glassy flow of the Nerañjarā which in its downward course also washed the village of Senānī-gāma and the sombre site of the Bo-tree. Performing as they did the sacrificial rites, daily ablutions and other duties they were spending their time in perfect peace and contentment without brooking any cause of fear. The princely ascetic Siddhārtha was completely at liberty to move about and act as he pleased, and seek a religious career as well he might. Even his great attainment did not excite their grudge or jealousy, and his movements and

[1] *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (S.B.E.) : "He may set up the two fires under the *Kṛittikās*, for they, *Kṛittikās*, are doubtless *Agni's* asterism So that if he sets up his fires under *Agni's* asterism he will bring about a correspondence between his fire and the asterism. Moreover, the other lunar asterisms consist of one, two, three or four stars, so that the *Kṛittikās* are the most numerous (of asterisms). Hence he thereby obtains an abundance."

[2] *Papañcha-sūdani*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 233 : *Pacchimā janatā chetiyaṭṭhānaṃ akāsi*.

[3] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, I, IX.

ponderings immediately following it did evoke any feeling of suspicion neither. If we can rely upon the authenticity of Buddhist records, both canonical and post-canonical, we cannot but admit that even when the Buddha wended his way back to this tract with the sole object of subduing the Jaṭilas of the place and entered into their hermitage, they unsuspectingly accorded hospitality to him, treating him as their distinguished guest. When on his first arrival at their hermitage he enquired if they had any objection to allowing him to stay for a night in their fire-room, which was undoubtedly the *sanctum sanctorum* in their dwelling place, it was frankly pointed out that they had no objection whatever, and that if they had any scruple in the matter, it was due only because of their fear that his life might be in danger from the fury of a Serpent-king who jealously guarded the hearth. They were all very glad that he took up his abode in a pleasant woodland near by and found there a suitable place of sojourn. During all the time of his stay at Uruvelā they paid respectful attention to him. The only instance of exception to be noted is that at the approach of the day of 'great sacrifice' (*Mahāyañña*), the annual function celebrated as the most joyous occasion by all the inhabitants of Aṅga and Magadha, they wished in their heart of hearts if he would think well not to make his appearance at their residence on that particular day, fearing lest his superior personal dignity and charm might overpower the credulous multitudes who would assemble, and serve only to increase his gain and fame and decrease those thitherto enjoyed by them. But even with respect to this the Buddhist account carefully points out that that, too, was nothing but a passing

thought. For although to allay their fear the wise Buddha had retired of his own accord to a place far off, they felt sorry that he was not to be found in the locality when they wanted to greet him also on that day with their usual hospitality.

The reformist zeal which actuated the move on the part of the Enlightened One of great hypnotic powers naturally carried with it the love of conquest and the spirit of aggression. Thus we need not be astonished to see that the Buddhist chronicler has aptly described the coversion of the Jaṭilas by the Great Buddda as *Jaṭila-damana* or Infliction of defeat on the matted-hair ascetics of the Gayā region by the employment of all the strategms consistent with his position. The matter did not stop here. The account glibly proeeeds to narrate that the powerful victor made an open exhibition of these convert-captives in the great metropolis of Magadha to the very people who had so long paid their unstinted homage to them.[1]

The muse of history is strangely mute over the long roll of events affecting the interests of the Jaṭilas as Jaṭilas within the bounds of Uruvelā during the succession of centuries. The life of this region as portrayed in the informative itinerants of Fa-Hian breathes altogether a Buddhistic atmosphere, although the Chūlavaṃsa would have us believe that Buddhaghosha, who was destined to figure as the greatest among the Pāli commentators, hailed from a Brahmin family of Bodh-Gayā and had excelled in Vedic lore with all the auxiliary sciences and arts and drunk

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, I, 22.

deep at the fountain of Patañjali's system,[1]—the acquisition which he succeeded in bringing to bear upon his interpretation and defence of Buddhism. If this story be true, the gifted Brahmin youth saw the light of the day in the same neighbourhood of the Bo-tree where after the great event of Buddhahood the sage of the Śākyas happened to meet and converse with an erudite Brahmin vaunting of his knowledge of Vedānta, the Brahma-lore. The Buddha is said to have been pressed with the inquiry as to the qualities that go to make a real Brahmin (*brāmaṇa-karaṇā dhammā*).[2] It will not be far from legitimate, we think, to infer that the even tenor of Brahmanism remained unbroken in Uruvelā, and that the light of Vedic lore was kept ever burning and it did not extinguish even under the glamour of the new-born faith which dazzled the place and the people. Brahmanism never ceased to be a living force.

Brahmā, according to Buddhist tradition, is the supreme Brahmanical deity who prevailed upon the Buddha to proclaim the new faith to the world for the good of mankind. It is again the Vedic or earlier Brahmanical deities Śakra and Brahmā who at every important step looked after the comforts of the Enlightened One preaching his new gospel. With the tide of time the tradition changes its complexion, Śakra retires into the background and Brahmā is in a mood to retire, yielding place to Lord Śiva under the iconic form of Maheśvara on whom devolves the benign work of acting

[1] *Bodhimaṇḍasamīpamhi jāto Brāhmaṇa-māṇavo |*
Vijjāsippakalāvedi tīsu Vedesu pāragū ||
parivatteti sampuṇṇapadaṃ rattiṃ Patañjali-mataṃ ||

[2] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, I, 2.

as the guardian angel to Dharmeśa-Dharmeśvara, the Buddha transformed.[1]

The protracted law-suit fought between the present Śaiva Mahanth of Bodh-Gayā and the Anagarika Dharmapala of the Mahābodhi Society is popularly known as a case between the Hindus and the Buddhists for the ownership of the Bodh-Gayā temple and its sacred area. The Mahanth's claim to ownership, which the court of law has in some sense upheld, is said to have been based on "some *sanads*, or grants, given to his predecessors in the 16th or 17th century A.D. by one of the Mughal emperors, either Akbar, Jahangir or Shah Jahan." Without entering here into the merits of the case which has been a cause of much chagrin of feelings to the Buddhist world we may maintain that the Buddhist leader would have pressed a wrong issue if he had instituted a title-suit at the first instance for the possession of the shrine, the apple of contention. If *de facto* possession be the main incidence of the law of real property, it could not be denied that the Mahanth was in actual possession of the shrine at least in the sense that it was situated within his undisputed jurisdiction and as such he could not but appear as a hereditary custodian of the towering temple with the sanctuaries around from a date when there were no Buddhists in the locality or anywhere else in India proper to take care of it. The first decision of the court of law has indeed allowed the Śaiva Mahanth to enjoy the fetish of legal ownership over the site of the greatest known Buddhist shrine in

[1] Maheśvara-devaputra of the *Lalita-vistara* is honoured in two of the Barhut Jātaka labels by the designation *Arahaguta devaputa* (*Arhadgupta devaputra*).—Barua and Sinha's *Barhut Inscriptions.*

India, and has even recognised his claim to act as its *sebayat* or beneficiary, investing him with the right of regular worship within its holy precincts. But it has not at the same time debarred the Buddhists from the right of entering into the sacred area and conducting worship in their own approved ways.

In point of fact, this decision, interesting in itself, coupled with the provisions of the Government of India Act for the the preservation of ancient monuments of India, has served just to push the question of ownership into the background and bring the question of control to the forefront. Neither the Śaiva Mahanth, the acclaimed owner of the holy site and *sebayat* of the temple, nor the Buddhists of the world who are tormented with chagrin of feelings that the ownership does not formally belong to them, possess any longer the right of making structural additions and alterations within the shrine itself or its compound, removing anything of antiquity from the sacred area, or preventing each other from performing religious rites and paying worship in the approved ways of each. One of the responsible officers deputed by the Public Works Department to act in behalf of the Department of Archæology remains placed in charge of the great temple and all other ancient monuments to be found within its wide surroundings. Just as at the lower end of the sacred area a passer-by has to turn aside to mark the imposing sight of the high wall surrounding the impregnable citadel of the Śaiva Mahanth serving as a Brahmanical monastery, so walking higher up his eyes are sure to be pleased to get a sense of relief at the sight of the open doors of the welcoming Buddhist rest-house built in recent times

under the auspices of the Mahābodhi Society, while close by on his right stands, half hidden from view, the quarter of the Public Works Department officer who is really vested with the power of control. The rest-house prominently stands overlooking the towering temple and the entire site remains open, day and night, to all pilgrims, official visitors and sight-seers. While certain employees of the Śaiva Mahanth lie in wait to catch hold of some of the credulous Hindu pilgrims, decoy them into some dark recesses tempting them with the rare sight of the figure of the five Pāṇḍava brothers and other unimportant Hindu divinities, and sluggishly proceed to delude them into the belief that the shrine is a Hindu one, the trained guides appearing prominent with the badge and livery of the Department of Archæology take the inquisitive visitors and sight-seers round the temple drawing their attention to all lingering antiquities of importance and filling their hearts with overwhelming awe at the sight of the undying acts of Buddhist devotional piety. Though the question of ownership has thus been thrown into the background and the power of control virtually rests with certain departments of the Government, strangely enough, the apple of contention continues as before to trouble the two worlds, Hindu and Buddhist. And sad it is to find that the leaders of these two communities have hitherto failed to set the remaining qestion of approved modes of rites and worship at rest by forming a committee of experts from both the sections of people to determine the modes that would be prejudicial to none!

The case of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gayā, even as it stands to-day, gives rise to these two important issues, each calling

for a definite opinion from the impartial historian: (1) Whether or not, the Mahanth as the acknowledged head of a sect of the Śaivas or worshippers of Maheśvara, who have permanently settled down in Bodh-Gayā, can claim to act as a hereditary custodian of the Bodh-Gayā temple and its sacred area; and (2) whether or not, the Mahanth as a recognised head of the Hindu community can legitimately claim the right of worship of the Buddha-image, the Bo-tree as well as the Hindu divinities in the sacred area of Mahābodhi in his own approved ways.

As for the first issue, we have already noted that a time came when in the Buddhist legend itself, the Śaiva Brahmanical deity Maheśvara was entrusted with the benign work of acting as the guardian angel to the Buddha. The testimony of Hwen Thsang clearly proves that as early as the 7th century A.D. the Buddhists themselves freely recognised the very temple in dispute as a magnificent erection of the devotional piety of a Śaivite Brahmin who undertook the costly work under inspiration from no other deity than Maheśvara, the Lord of Mt. Kailāsa. The belief then current among the Buddhists of Bodh-Gayā indeed was that when Maheśvara, the supreme deity of the Śaivas, generously inspired his Brahmin votary to erect the great shrine to the Buddha, he inspired also the younger brother of this Brahmin to excavate the tank, the *Buddha-pokhar*, on the south side of the temple. If we can rely upon the testimony of the great Chinese pilgrim, the life-like image of the Buddha which he found enshrined in the main sanctuary of the temple at the time of his visit was the wonderful handiwork of a skilled Brahmin artist employed by the builder of the temple. If

the two Brahmin brothers had afterwards become votaries of the Buddha, for that, too, the credit is due at the first instance to Śiva-Maheśvara, the Brahmanical deity ungrudgingly rendering distinct service to the Buddha.[1] To quote Hwen Thsang in his own words:[2]

"On the site of the present *vihāra* Aśoka-rāja at first built a small *vihāra* (shrine). Afterwards there was a Brahman who reconstructed it on a large scale. At first this Brahman was not a believer in the law of Buddha, and sacrificed to Maheśvara. Having heard that this heavenly spirit (god) dwelt in the Snowy Mountains, he forthwith went there with his younger brother to seek by prayer (his wishes). The Deva said, those who pray should aim to acquire some extensive religious merit. If you who pray have not this ground (of merit), then neither can I grant what you pray for.'

The Brahman said, 'What meritorious work can I set about to enable me to obtain my desire?'

The god said, 'If you wish to plant a superior root (growth) of merit, then seek a superior field (in which to acquire it). The *Bodhi-tree* is the place for attaining the fruit of a Buddha. You should straightway return there and by the *Bodhi-tree* erect a large *vihāra* and excavate a large tank, and devote

[1] So long as the fact remains that the Śaivite Brahmin erected the temple to the Buddha for the fulfilment of a worldly desire, namely, the securing of the post of minister to a reigning monarch, the question as to whether he commenced the pious work as a lay worshipper of Śiva or as a lay worshipper of the Buddha is immaterial. A Hindu openly professing to be a devotee of Śiva or of Brahmā or of Vishṇu may proceed to make a religious offering even in honour of a Muhammadan saint or Fakir in all sincerity of heart for the fulfilment of a worldly desire, say, for having the birth of a male child in the family, without ceasing thereby to be a Hindu.

[2] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, p. 119.

all kinds of religious offerings (to the service). You will then surely obtain your wishes.' "

"The Brahmans having received the divine communication, conceived a believing heart, and they both returned to the place. The elder brother built the *vihāra*, the younger excavated the tank, and then they prepared large religious offerings, and sought with diligence their heart's desire. The result followed at once. The Brahman became the great minister of the king. He devoted his emoluments to the work of charity. Having built the *vihāra* he invited the most skilful artists to make a figure (likeness) of Tathāgata when he first reached the condition of Buddha. Years and months passed without result; no one answered the appeal. At length there was a Brahman who came and addressed the congregation thus: I will thoroughly execute the excellent figure of Tathāgata."

King Śaśāṅka of Bengal, the hated rival of the Pushpabhūti royal family and blackmailed in the court-history of Kanauj as the base assassinator of King Rājyavardhana, the elder brother and predecessor of Harsha, is made to appear in the pages of the Si-yu-ki of Hwen Thsang, the Chinese pilgrim and Buddhist priest, as a formidable enemy of Buddhism. The cutting down of the sacred Bo-tree is mentioned in bold letters as the very first heinous act of vandalism on the part of wicked Śaśāṅka, which he intended to consummate by the destruction of the main Buddha-image of the great Buddhist shrine at Bodh-Gayā. How far the blackening of the character of Śaśāṅka by Hwen Thsang was due to the prejudice which the Maukhari court naturally tried to create in the mind of the inquisitive but credulous Buddhist

pilgrim and foreign traveller, entertained as its most distinguished guest, is still a problem for the sober historian to solve. Suspicion begins to grow and gain in strength on this point as we find that after the sword had failed to sufficiently retaliate the wrongs done to the Maukhari family by the artful rival from Bengal, the pen of the court-poet Bāṇa was employed to feed fat the ancient grudge. The spirit which enacted this court-record would only find its fulfilment in duping an eminent foreign agent with unique attention, honour and courtesy to act as a very powerful agent, though unconsciously, for broadcasting the stigma it sought to attach to the hated name. It may appear from the procedure followed by the Maukhari court that it did not let off this agent to do its work before it had succeeded in creating these two delusive impressions: (1) that King Harsha was a fervent Buddhist although still paying the customary homage to the god Maheśvara, and (2) that, on the other hand, wicked Śaśāṅka of the far east proved himself only to be a fanatical desecrator of Buddhism in the holiest of its shrines while madly acting as an avowed champion of the cause of Lord Maheśvara.

We have already cast our doubt over Hwen Thsang's account relating to the attempt of Śaśāṅka to destroy the Bo-tree by cutting it down. Now with regard to the remaining portion of his account that relates to the Śaiva king's project of replacement of the Buddha-image by a figure of Maheśvara in the main sanctuary of the great temple at Bodh-Gayā, we may reasonably maintain that the palpable self-contradiction, inherent in it, alone suffices to indicate that it is not exactly the gospel truth. It will be worth

while to reproduce here the words of the Chinese pilgrim to establish our contention.

"Śaśāṅka-rāja having cut down the Bodhi-tree wished to destroy this image (the figure of Tathāgata enshrined in the great temple); but having seen its loving features, his mind had no rest or determination, and he returned with his retinue homewards. On his way he said to one of his officers, 'We must remove that statue of Tathāgata and place there a figure of Maheśvara.'

The officer, having received the order, was taken by fear, and, sighing, said, 'If I destroy the figure of Tathāgata, then during successive *Kalpas* I shall reap misfortune. If I disobey the king, he will put me to a cruel death and destroy my family; in either case, whether I obey or disobey, such will be the consequences; what, then, shall I do?'

On this he called to his presence a man with a believing heart (*i.e.*, a believer in Buddha) to help him, and sent him to build up across the chamber and before the figure of Buddha a wall of brick. The man, from a feeling of shame at the darkness, placed a burning lamp (with the concealed figure); then on the interposing wall he drew a figure of Maheśvara-deva. The work being finished, he reported the matter. The king hearing it, was seized with fear; his body produced sores and his flesh rotted off, and after a short while he died. Then the officer quickly ordered the intervening wall to be pulled down again, when, although several days had elapsed, the lamp was still found to be burning."[1]

From this account it does not certainly appear that Śaśāṅka, the decried royal promoter of the Śaiva cause, was

[1] Beal's *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 121-122.

either a religious fanatic or a vandal, but rather as one on whose mind the very sight of the lovely figure of the Buddha, the lasting work of fame of a Brahmin artist enshrined as the greatest object of veneration in the temple erected by a Śaiva Brahmin, produced the deepest impression. It seems that nothing would be more distant from his intention than the destruction of such an awe-inspiring image. The account itself clearly shows that his mind was so tenderly disposed then that even a passing thought of this kind would be strong enough to fill it with fear and trepidation of heart. It would be simply a misreading of fact to take the account to mean that the king of Bengal marched with his troops and transports to Bodh-Gayā with the sole object of converting the Buddhist shrine into a Śaiva one. The impression which it creates rather is that when he had halted at Bodh-Gayā on his way back to his capital after having carried out a campaign in the kingdom of Magadha or farther west, he eventually visited the recently built famous shrine. A seal-matrix of Śaśāṅka found on Rhotasgarh[1] may be taken to establish that he was marching by the highway of which we have a familiar description in the Mahāvastu and the Lalita-vistara.

Even if we take Hwen Thsang at his own word, the king's command to his officer was not to destroy the Buddha-image but just to "remove that statue and place there a figure of Maheśvara." How his officer could construe the simple and unambiguous words of the king to mean destruction is something beyond our conjecture. The account proceeds

[1] Fleet's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, p. 284. The inscription reads *Śrī-mahā sāmanta Śaśāṅkadevasya*.

further to narrate that the impending calamity was averted by the officer by an ingenuous plan of seeking the aid of a pious Buddhist devotee to keep the Buddha-image concealed by a brick-wall erected across the chamber with a figure of Maheśvara drawn upon it. This ingenuous plan would, however, prove to be a very poor device if the Śaiva king were, as alleged, bent upon the work of destruction. Whatever might have been the import of the king's command, it transpires that it was anything but the destruction of the Buddha-image. The task was anyhow left to be executed by a pious Buddhist devotee, and when it was executed, the figure of Maheśvara was assigned a place nowhere else but on the covering wall as if to make it play the humble rôle of a guardian angel of the Buddhist sanctuary. We cannot reasonably interpret the whole affair as tremendously gratifying to the Śaiva spirit for aggrandisement.

If, as it seems, Śaivism became aggressive from the 5th or the 6th century A.D., or even from a still earlier date, under the strong support of such a powerful king of northern India as Śaśāṅka, it must be conceded that it had tried to make its supremacy felt not only at Bodh-Gayā but over the entire region of Gayā. Viewed in its true historical perspective, this work of aggression on the part of Maheśvara was to gain an ascendancy over his rivals Śakra and Brahmā, and so far as the Buddhist shrine of Bodh-Gayā is concerned, he sought to step into the place of these earlier guardian deities, and never to usurp the eminence of the Buddha.

Proceeding further down to the earlier period of the reign of the Pāla kings of Bengal, say, "towards the close of the

9th, or the beginning of the 10th century A.D." which was about to see the full blossoming of the budding architectural and sculptural features of the life of the Gayā region as a whole, we happily chance upon an important epigraphic record of one Keśava, son of Ujjvala, the stone-cutter, clearly showing how the erudite Śaivite Brahmin scholars and their successors were living at Bodh-Gayā side by side with the Buddhists of the place without any feeling of enmity or discord. The record goes so far as to indicate that a devout Hindu was freely allowed to set up a stone-figure of Śiva-Brahmā (Mahādevaśchaturmukha) within the temple of Buddha-Dharmeśa for the benefit of the Śaivite Brahmin scholars of the locality. As Dr. Bloch informs us, the stone containing this inscription, in nine lines, is now exhibited in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and it shows three figures, Sūrya, Śiva and Vishṇu, "all of very crude fabric," Sūrya to the proper right, Śiva in the centre and Vishṇu to the proper left." The inscription itself occupies a space just beside the figure of Vishṇu. The enshrined object of worship is a Śivaliṅga of the type which is "exceedingly common in North-Eastern India" and is "still called *Chaumukh Mahādev* as in the inscription."—a phallic symbol of Maheśvara with four faces, which may be looked upon as an adaptation of "the well-known images of Brahmā, by the Śaivas." The enshrinement of such a peculiar type of Śivaliṅga at Bodh-Gayā evidently resulted from the same process of synthesis or compromise between Śaivism and Brahmanism which found expression in the figure of Prapitāmaheśvara, a Śivaliṅga showing the face of Brahmā, installed at Gayā proper during the Pāla period. The inscription which is

dated in the 26th year of the reign of Dharmapāla reads as below :—

a. Text[1]

L1—*Oṁ* (||, *Dharmeś-āyatane ramye*
Ujjvalasya śilābhidaḥ || *Ke—*
L2—*śav-ākhyena putreṇa Mahādevaś—*
chaturmukhaḥ || *Śreshṭha—*
L3—*me*——*Mahābodhi-nivāsināṃ* ||
Snātakā—
L4—(*nāṃ*) *prajāyās-tu śreyase*
pratishṭhāpitaḥ || *Pushkari—*
L5—*ṇyatyagādhā cha pūtā Vishṇupadī-samā* ||
Tritaye—
L6—*na sahasreṇa drammāṇāṃ khānitā satāṃ* ||
L7—*Shaḍviṃśatitame varshe Dharmapāle mahībhuji* ||
L8—*Bhādra-va* (*ba*)*hula-pañchamyāṃ sunor Bhāska—*
L9—*rasyāhani* || *Oṃ* (||).

b. Translation

[Commenced with Oṅkāra, the Vedic praṇava]

(A figure of) *Chaumukh-Mahādev*[2] has been installed in the pleasant abode (temple) of (Buddha), the Lord of Righteousness,[3] by Keśava, son of Ujjvala, the stone-cutter, for the benefit of the descendants of *snātakas* (the erudite Śaivite Brahmin scholars) residing at Mahābodhi (Bodh-Gayā). A tank, of exceeding depth and holy like the river Ganges[4] has been excavated for these good people at the cost

[1] Based on Bloch's *Notes on Bodh-Gayā* in *Archæological Survey of India,* Annual Report for 1908-9, p. 150.

[2] A *liṅga* with four faces, being a phallic device, representing a figure of Śiva and the four-faced Brahmā.

[3] *Dharmeśa* or *Dharmeśvara* is a designation of the Buddha-image worshipped at Bodh-Gayā.

[4] Bloch has missed altogether the sense of the word *Vishṇupadī* as used in this inscription when he takes it to mean the footprint of Vishṇu. The word *Vishṇupadī* signifies in Sanskrit nothing but the river Ganges.

of three thousand *drachmas*. (Written) in the 26th year of the reign of Dharmapāla, the enjoyer of the earth, on the 5th day of the dark fortnight of Bhādrapada, on a Saturday.

[Concluded with Oṅkāra]

We have already tried to show that after the Pālas and during the reign of the later Sena kings of Bengal Buddhism fell into decay in the region of Gayā and even at Bodh-Gayā, due apparently to the lack of active support, and that the early history of Bodh-Gayā from the Buddhist point of view came to be closed with certain votive erections and pious works done under the auspices and during the reign of king Aśokavalla of Sapādalaksha in the 13th century A.D. In consequence of the deluge caused by the onrush of Islamic forces and a sweeping destruction of the sanctuaries in the Holy Land, the Buddhists permanently lost their foothold at Bodh-Gayā as at all other important centres of their influence in India proper. The later Gayā-māhātmya, composed in the 13th or the 14th century A.D., reveals a changed state of things when the Brahmins of Gayā brought misery on their life by going out of their jurisdiction to officiate as priests at the worship of the Buddha-Dharmeśvara at Bodh-Gayā.

Thus we may dispose of the first issue with the observation that from the earliest times till now the Śaivite Brahmins have neither lost nor waived their coveted right of acting as hereditary custodians of the Buddhist shrine at Bodh-Gayā.

And as for the second issue concerning the right of the Hindus to worship the Buddha-image Dharmeśvara, the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* in the Bodh-Gayā temple and its sacred area, we have noticed that as far back as the Kushāṇa age it is enjoined in the Epic version of the earlier Eulogium that every pious Hindu visiting Gayā should make it a point to go also to Dharmaprastha or Bodh-Gayā and have a sacred touch of the Buddha-image of the place. The later Eulogium in the Purāṇas enjoins in the same manner that every Hindu pilgrim to the Gayā region desiring to release the departed spirits of his ancestors must visit also Bodh-Gayā to pay his respectful homage to the Buddha-image Dharmeśvara as well as the Bo-tree *Aśvattha*, and prescribes a set formula of prayer to be addressed to the Bo which happens to be no other tree than an Indion Fig :

> Namas te Aśvattha-rājāya Brahmā-Vishṇu-Śivātmane |
> Bodhi-drumāya karttṛiṇāṃ pitṛiṇāṃ tāraṇāya cha ||
> Ye asmat kule mātṛivaṃśe bāndhavā durgatiṃ gatāḥ |
> tvad darśanāt sparśanāch cha svargatiṃ yāntu śāśvatīm ||
> Ṛiṇatrayaṃ mayā dattaṃ Gayām āgatya Vṛiksharāṭ |
> tvad prasādān mahāpāpād vimukto' haṃ bhavārṇavāt ||

"I bend my head low in obeisance to thee, O Aśvattha, the lord of trees, standing as a living form of the Holy Triad of our pantheon with thy high fame as Bodhi-druma, the renowned Bo, for the release of the dead forefathers, the makers of the line of descent.

Those in my direct line and those connected with the mother's line, the kith and kin who have gone into the state of woe, may they, from thy holy sight and touch, pass into an eternal state of heavenly life.

The triple debts have I paid, O king of trees, by coming

on pilgrimage to Gayā. By thy benign grace am I rescued from the awful ocean of existence and liberated from deadly sins."

Thus this set formula of prayer or hymn of praise sets forth the Hindu purpose in pilgrimaging to Bodh-Gayā, and paying homage to the Buddha-image Dharmeśvara and the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* which is no other than the securing of release of the dead forefathers from the state of woe, the payment of triple debts and the liberation from all dreadful sins. The same is, no doubt, the inner motive which guides the pious action of even the Buddhist pilgrims from some part of India of our time. We must humbly differ from Dr. Bloch[1] when he suggests on the strength of the above hymn that the Hindus do not pay homage to the Fig tree which stands as the living symbol of Buddhism but to a second Pipal tree which stands to the north of the Bodh-Gayā temple and is larger and finer than the Bo. The wording of the invocation hardly leaves any room for doubt that the Pipal forming the object of veneration is none other than the Bo-tree *Aśvattha.*

Considered in the light of these historical evidences, on the second issue, too, we have to pronounce our judgment in favour of the Mahanth of Bodh-Gayā and freely recognise his right of worship at the Buddhist shrine in accordance with the traditional Hindu mode.

But the question yet remains : Have the Buddhists themselves ever disputed the Hindu right of worship at their shrines? So far as our information goes, the Buddhists have never and nowhere prevented the Hindus from either

[1] Bloch's *Notes on Bodh-Gayā* in *Archæological Survey Report,* 1908-09, p. 152.

visiting or conducting worship at their shrines. As a matter of fact, they have no case against the Hindu devotees coming to a Buddhist shrine for worship. Their shrines remain open to all for worship, without any distinction of caste and creed. The inscription of Keśava, engraved during the reign of Dharmapāla, clearly proves that the Bnddhists were liberal and tolerant enough even to allow a Hindu to instal a figure of his deities, Śiva and Brahmā, in their temple at Bodh-Gayā (Dharmeśa-āyatane) for the benefit of the resident Śaivite Brahmins. Aśokavalla, the last known powerful Buddhist king of India who made structural additions in the sacred area of the Bodh-Gayā temple, did not hesitate to engage an erudite Brahmin scholar and poet to compose the text of the votive record and royal panegyric in commemoration of his pious deed.[1] Though avowedly a Buddhist king who toiled like 'a bee on the pollen of the lotus-feet of Jinendra' (*Jinendra-charaṇāravinda-makaranda-madhukara*),[2] Aśokavalla rebuilt in his dominion a fallen temple of Śiva and considered it to be an act worthy of great men (*mahatāṃ yuktaṃ satānāṃ puṃsaḥ*),[3] thereby upholding the ancient tradition of the Buddhist king Aśoka of Magadha and the Jaina king Khāravela of Kaliṅga, particularly that of the latter represented as 'a repairer of all temples of the gods (*savadevāyatana-saṃkāra-kāraka*).[4] Read the votive record and eulogy of Aśokavalla composed for him by the erudite Brahmin scholar and poet in a great hurry (*praśastiṃ drutataram akarot*) and you will be at once convinced of the

[1] *IA*, Vol. X, An inscription at Gayā, p. 314.
[2] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 346.
[3] *IA*, Vol. X, pp. 345-346.
[4] Barua's *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions in the Udayagiri and Khaṇḍagiri Caves*, I. 16.

folly of the unwise step on the part of the Buddhist king to allow the Brahmin composer a free hand in the matter. The inevitable result has been that he has produced a Buddhist record written entirely in his own style and unlike all other known records of the Buddhists in tone and effect :

Oṃ namo Buddhāya, nam o dharmāya śarmaṇe, namaḥ
Saṅghāya siṃhāya laṅghanāya bhavāṃbudheḥ.

"Obeisance to Buddha—the pure ! obesiance to Dharma—the bliss ! obeisance to the Saṅgha—the lion ! for the crossing of the world-ocean."

Such would never have been the precise wording of the invocation, if the document had been composed by a person imbued with Buddhist tradition. And what is worse, in going to describe the daily worship of the Buddha in the temple at Bodh-Gayā in the light of that of some of the Brahmanical deities in a Hindu temple, he has unknowingly suggested reflection on the character of the whole of Buddhism of his age :

Pūjāḥ pūjyatamasya pañchamagatairbbādyais -
trisandhyaṃ sadā Rambhā-sannibha—
Bhāvinibhir abhito Chetibhir (a) tyadbhutaṃ
Nṛityantibhir anaṅga-laṅgima-gatairggitā-
dir aṅgair imā yasmāt santi hi
śāsane bhagavataḥ satkāra-visphāritaḥ.

"Since in the religion of Bhagavat, worship is here offered to the most worshipful, always three times a day, by means of instrumental music in the highest key, together with Rambhā-like Bhāvinis and Chetis dancing round wonderfully with mirth in singing and so on, in a way appertaining to the unions of Anaṅga (Kāma)— (worship) increased by hospitable entertainments."[1]

[1] *A*, Vol. X, pp. 342-344.

How a thoughtless poetical description like this, taken uncritically, may mislead its reader will be evident from the following comment of a scholar like Dr. Bhagawanlal Indraji :—

"Bhāvinis are the dancing and singing girls attached to temples. Cheṭis are maid-servants belonging to temples who perform certain menial services as well as join with the Bhāvinis in singing. Such women are still employed in the Brahmanical temples of Southern and Eastern India. They are of very loose morals ; and their employment in Buddhist temples of the 12th century is an indication of its corruption."[1]

If the worship of the Buddha-image and the Bo-tree be left entirely in the hands of the Hindus, it is likely to be utilised to the end of time for the sordid business of releasing the disembodied spirits from a state of woe or obtaining an easy passport to heavenly worlds. It can never be expected to cast off the fear of the ghosts and consciously rise up to the sublimity of Buddhist feeling of pure joy of merit and delight in making a free offering of that joy to the parents, to begin with, to the teachers and preceptors, nay, for the uplift of all sentient beings.[2] A Hindu pilgrim can never be expected, we dare say, to cherish the *Bodhimaṇḍa* as the very centre of the cultured universe, or to be actuated by that earnest longing for the holy sight, or to be prepared to undertake a long and perilous journey through 'dust and desert,' or to

[1] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 344, fn.

[2] The sentiment has found expression in the Buddhist votive records in such a phraseology as :

Yad atra puṇyam tad bhavatvāchāryopādhyāya-mātāpitṛi-pūrvaṅgamaṃ kritvā sakala-sattva rāśer anuttara-jnāna-phdlvāptaya iti.

be so devoutly inspired by the holy sight as to give a felicitous expression to his feelings in the manner of Chinese pilgrims.

Whatever be the present legal position of the Śaiva Mahanth or the historian's verdict in his favour, so long as the name Mahābodhi or Bodh-Gayā designates the sacred site, it is humanly impossible to deny that the great shrine belongs to the Buddhists. From a purely human point of view, the Mahanth appears guilty of these two charges: (1) that by setting up a bug-bear of legal ownership he has unnecessarily checked a free and spontaneous expression of Buddhist religious feeling and piety which is so essential for the resuscitation of the lost glory of the place; and (2) that by his callous apathy towards the shrine he has deviated from the ancient tradition of generosity and by enforcing the Hindu mode of worship and wounding the religious susceptibilities of millions of people he has deliberately acted contrary to the noble principle of Hindu toleration. He is not only unsympathetic but antipathetic. If his ownership be a nominal one, he should frankly speak it out, and if a real one, he should try to justify it by effecting a palpable improvement of things in and out. Not to speak it out is to be guilty of hypocrisy, and not to justify it is to be guilty of culpable negligence of duty amounting to irreligion. The onus of proof lies upon him and him alone. At all events, the Hindu verdict in the story of the curse of Brahmā, as we find it in the Gayā-māhātmya, is that the Brahmins of Gayā had not done the right thing to go out of their jurisdiction and conduct the worship of the Buddha at Bodh-Gayā, lured by lucre.

17. GAYĀ AS PLACE FOR FUNERAL OBSEQUIES

We have so far been concerned to create an impression as if at the time of the advent of the Buddha the high sanctity of Gayā consisted in its being pre-eminently a place for ceremonial bathing and fire-sacrifice. In connexion with the periodical bathing in the holy waters of the Gayā tank and river we did nowhere discuss if even at that early period of its existence the whole of the Gayā region was equally a place for the performance of funeral rites and rituals. We have, on the other hand, been disposed to maintain that Gayā, noted originally for ceremonial bathing and fire-sacrifice, eventually came to acquire the high fame of being the main place for the performance of funeral obsequies, the propitiation of the *manes* and the offering of the cakes of rice to the departed forefathers as a means of securing for them release from the pitiable condition of spirit-life and the eternal bliss of heavenly life. The purpose of the present article is to examine how far the above impression and finding are correct and justifiable.

We have to frankly confess here that the aforesaid impression and finding are based on the bulk of early Buddhist criticisms exposing the futility of ceremonial bathing in the holy waters of Gayā and setting forth the superior efficacy of moral practices as a means of purifying oneself, such criticisms as we meet with in the Vatthūpama-Sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya and the Jaṭila-Sutta of the Udāna,

"The Bāhukā, the Adhikakkā,
The Gayā, the Sundarikā,
The flowing stream Bāhumatī,

Can never wash one's blackness white,
Though, witless, one should wash for aye.
Of what avail Sundarikā's proud flow,
Payāga's flood, the waves of Bāhukā,
The man of enmity and evil deeds,
Remains uncleansed of all his soil and guilt.
Upon the pure smiles constant May,
The pure keep endless holy day ;
The pure, by actions pure contest,
Their every offering is blest.
Here, Brahmin, bathe where bathing cleansing gives,
And make thee refuge sure of all that lives.
If clean thy tongue from lying speech,
If living thing thou dost not harm
Tak'st nothing that is not thine own
Faithful of heart, as free of hand,
What should'st thou do at far Gayā ?
(A well to thee is just a Gayā !) "[1]

This ancient and most archaic Pāli couplet might indeed be cited to prove that Gayā, in the very life-time of the Buddha, was counted among the seven traditionally important Hindu *tīrthas*—the places of pilgrimage and ceremonial bathing. And in point of fact, the Buddha's emphasis on Gayā would be unintelligible, if we do not agree with Buddhaghosha in thinking that the obvious reason for laying the emphasis was that in popular estimation Gayā enjoyed pre-eminence over all the then known Hindu *tirthas* (*Gayā loke sammattarā*). But bathing (*snāna*) is primarily a hygenic term and a purificatory rite proceeding

[1] Silachara's *Discourses of Gotama the Buddha*, Vol. I, p. 41.

from the belief *mens sana in corpore sano* : *Śarīram ādyaṃ khalu dharma-sādhanaṃ*. Bathing is indeed the practice, whether interpreted in its natural or figurative sense, which brings significance to a Hindu *tīrtha* as a *tīrtha* or *sanctorum*. But this is just one of the aspects of a Hindu place of pilgrimage. In connexion with the Gayā-tīrtha we have got still to ascertain what were the special occasions for the Hindu pilgrims to flock to it from different quarters for the performance of ceremonial ablutions in the holy waters of its tank and river in the Buddha's life-time.

The highly auspicious time for the annual ceremonial bathing at Gayā is specified in the following terms in the Vinaya Mahāvagga[1] :

Sītāsu hemantikāsu rattīsu
antar-aṭṭhakāsu himapāta-samaye,

which may be literally rendered :

"In the winter and autumn nights on the inter-*ashṭakā* days during the time of snow-fall (the dewy period)."

The Udāna might have been taken to present identically the same reading but for the single variant *antar-aṭṭhake*[2] (Loc. sing. of the neuter stem *antar-aṭṭhakaṃ*), which is, however, interpreted by Dharmapāla in the same sense as *antar-aṭṭhakāsu* (Loc. pl. of the feminine stem *antar-aṭṭhakā*) by the master commentator Buddhaghosha.

This is precisely specified in the Mahāsīhanāda-Sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya, along with the closing month (*Āshāḍha*, July-Aug.) of the hot season, as the time when the dreaded woodland becomes most dreadful. And here

[1] *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, p. 31.
[2] *Udāna*, p. 6.

the reading tallies entirely with that in the Udāna in having *antar-aṭṭhake* instead of *antar-aṭṭhakā*.[1]

Leaving aside all other words, Buddhaghosha explains *antar-aṭṭhakā* as signifying the eight nights between the two months of *Māgha* (Feb.-March) and *Phālguna* (March-April), the total being made up with the last four nights of *Māgha* and the first four nights of *Phālguna*.[2]

Taking the two words *antar-aṭṭhaka* and *himapāta-samaya* together, Dharmapāla explains them as meaning the dewy period of time comprising eight days, the last four days of the month of *Māgha* of the cold season and the first four days of the month of *Phālguna*.[3]

We say that both Buddhaghosha and Dharmapāla have sadly missed the technical sense of the word *aṭṭhakā* (Skt. *ashṭakā*) and the real import of the Pāli statement as a whole. The *aṭṭhakā* or *ashṭakā* is a familiar technical term of Brahmanical Hinduism, which primarily denotes a special kind of festival on the eighth day of the dark half of a lunar month between the full-moon day of *Agrahāyaṇa* (Dec.-Jan.) and that of the month of *Phālguna* (March-April),[4] and secondarily the eighth days of such dark fortnights. Such auspicious days are ordinarily three,[5] and are four in

[1] *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Vol. I, p. 79.

[2] *Papañcha-sūdanī*, Siamese Ed., Part II, p. 63 : *Antar-aṭṭhakā'ti Māgha-māsassa avasāne chatasso Phagguna-māsassa chatasso'ti evaṃ ubhinnam antare aṭṭha-rattiṃ.* Cf. *Samanta-pāsādikā.*

[3] *Udāna*-Commentary, Siamese Ed., p. 95 : *Antar-aṭṭhake himapāta-samaye'ti hemantassa utuno abbhantarabhūte Māgha-māsassa avasāne chattāro Phagguna-māsassa ādimhi chattāro'ti aṭṭha-divasa-parimāṇe himapātana-kāle.*

[4] *Mānava Gṛihya-Sūtra*, II. 2.8.1-2 : *Tisro'shṭakāḥ ūrdhvam Āgrahāyaṇyāḥ prāk Phālgunyās tāmisrāṇām ashṭamyaḥ.*

[5] *Āśvalāyana Gṛihya-Sūtra*, II. 4.1 and its commentary. See *Gṛihya Sūtras* (S.B.E.), Part I, p. 102, f.n.

the maximum even when the counting has to reckon the intercalary month (*adhika-māsa*). The *ashṭakā* festival is solely concerned with funeral rites—the *piṇḍa-pitṛi-yajña*, or *pubba-peta-bali* (to use the Buddha's phraseology), the ceremonial offering of oblations to the departed forefathers, the performance of funeral obsequies.[1] The term implies indeed the idea of a round of eight days, the *ashṭakā* functions commencing during the first eight days and consummating on the eighth day of the dark fortnight.

It will be seen at once that the Pāli statement of the auspicious time for ceremonial bathing is quite on a par with the following aphorism in the Āśvalāyana Gṛihya-Sūtra (II. 4.1) concerning the *ashṭakā* ceremonies:

Hemanta-śiśirayoś chaturṇām
aparapakshāṇām ashṭamīshu ashṭakāh.

"On the eighth days of the four dark fortnights of (the two seasons of) winter and *śiśira*—*ashṭakās* (are celebrated)."[2]

Interpreted in the light of this Sanskrit parallel, the Pāli statement may be appositely rendered:

"In the (icy-cold) nights of (the two seasons of) winter and autumn on the eighth days of the dark fortnights within the dewy period of time."

A confused echo of the technical sense of the significant term *antar-aṭṭhakā* lingers, no doubt, in the explanations offered by Buddhaghosha and Dharmapāla, both of whom have attached special importance to a period of time between the two months of *Māgha* and *Phālguna*, the former repre-

[1] *Āśvalāyana Gṛihya-Sūtra*, II. 4.3 : *pitṛibhyo dadyāt.*
[2] *Gṛihya-Sūtras* (S.B.E.), Part I.

senting the last month of the cold season and the latter the first month of the vernal. The third or last *ashṭakā* was generally celebrated in the dark fortnight of *Māgha*, and occasionally in that of the following month of *Phālguna*.[1] Thus it is easy to understand how the termination of the month of *Māgha* and the beginning of the month of *Phālguna*, completing a round of eight days, came to be popularly reckoned as the notable occasion for the bathing-festival at Gayā, called *Gayā-Phaggu* (*Gayā-Phālgu*), this festival coinciding with the last *ashṭakā*.

The Pāli statement, thus interpreted, is historically important as proving beyond doubt that even in the life-time of the Buddha the annual bathing in the holy waters of the Gayā tank and river was connected with the special funeral ceremonies, called *ashṭakās*, the last round of which comprised sometimes the eight days between the two months of *Māgha* and *Phālguna*. In other words, Gayā was, even at that early period of its existence, a holy region for the performance of funeral obsequies and the offering of *piṇḍas*. Bathing was indeed just an aspect of the rituals then observed. And those who are well-acquainted with the details of Hindu funeral rites will agree in saying that the ceremony of bathing went hand in hand with that of *tarpaṇa* or the propitiation of the *manes* by the repitition of prescribed formulas and the formal utterance of best wishes. According to the Vatthūpama-Sutta in the Majjhima-Nikāya, the Sarasvatī is one of the seven sacred rivers in which the people bathed to wash away their sins, while according to the Tīrthayātrā-parva of the Mahābhārata,

[1] See Oldenberg's note in the *Gṛihya-Sūtras* (S.B.E.), Part I, p. 102.

the same river represented a *tīrtha* visited by the pilgrims to propitiate the *manes*.[1]

18. GAYĀ AS MEETING PLACE OF HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

In building up this narrative of Gayā and Buddha-Gayā we have followed a twofold course of history. First, following a backward course or historical process of reduction, we have tried to have glimpses into the earlier and still earlier stages of the life of the Gayā region. By this course we reached back that early stage in which the locality with its primitive inhabitants appeared in its native simplicity. Secondly, following a forward course or historical process of development, we have endeavoured to present the successive pictures of the growing life of the same locality, viewed in two different perspectives, Hindu and Buddhist. By this course we could indicate the steps by which the locality attained a fuller and fuller life.

We saw that throughout the historical period of its existence Gayā-kshetra stood as an integral part of the ancient kingdom of Magadha, representing, as it did, a holy region distinct from one bearing the name of Magadha. The same Gayākshetra stands even now with its maximum traditional five *kos* circuit of pilgrimage, forming, as it does, the administrative headquarters of a district bearing its name and representing its widest possible geographical expansion within the province of Behar and Orissa. The main physical features of the locality are precisely those

[1] *Sarasvatīṃ samāsādya tarpayet pitṛidevatāḥ.*

hinted at in the Buddhist literary records, noted in the Epic-eulogium and described in the later Gayā-māhātmya. The holy region extends even now along the left or western bank of the Phalgu and the Nairañjanā presenting a distant view of the Rāma-Gayā on the other side of the Phalgu. The Phalgu is the same united flow of the two hill-streams, the Nerañjarā or Nairañjānā (Nilājan or Lilājan) and the Mahānadī (Mohānā), and still fed by the hundreds of cataracts with their torrential flow during the ruins. Some of the cataracts bear still names, the *ghṛitakulyā*, *Dadhikulyā* and *Madhukulyā*, which are clearly suggestive of the former prosperity of Gayā as a Hindu holy land that flowed with milk and honey. The very name *Gayā* may be connected with the Vedic word *gaya* meaning domestic wealth, the term *gaya-sādhana* or *gaya-sphāna* signifying the promotion of domestic wealth.

The city of Gayā or Gayā proper is still sandwiched between the Phalgu and a small set of hills containing some twenty-five hill-tops with the Gayaśira or Gayāśira (Brahmayoni) in the south-west and the Pretaśilā and the Rāmaśilā in the north-east, the former representing the most prominent natural landmark in the southern extremity of the town and the latter in its northern extremity. In between the two one has still to make note of such smaller peaks and ridges as the Bhasmakūṭa on which the sacrificial fire was once kept ablaze, the Gṛidhrakūṭa or Vultures' Peak, the Udyanta, the Gītanādita resounded with the music of the echo, the Prabhāsa, the Muṇḍapṛishṭha (Vishṇupada) and the Aravindaka.

The hills of Gayā stand up till now representing the

oldest known rocks and abounding in the piled up granite blocks, some of them bearing on their tops and ridges small temples dedicated to the worship of various Hindu deities and mostly built during the reign of the later Pāla kings of Bengal. The left bank of the Phalgu, too, is lined with such shrines, the most important of which is one consecrated to the worship of the footprint of Vishṇu, the mace-bearer. The huge block of stone which afforded seats for no fewer than one thousand persons and pressed down the top of the Gayaśira hill has vanished evidently to furnish materials for the numerous altars, footprints and images. But the narrow passage underneath a boulder symbolising the passage of the mother's womb still remains to put the Hindu pilgrims eager to escape from rebirth to the hardest trial. In point of fact, this passage, called Brahmayoni, has at last lent its name to the Gayaśira hill. The deepset basalt block on the southern slope of the Bhasmakūṭa hill survives to the present day with the so-called hoofmarks of the heavenly cow Kapilā and her calf to tickle the curiosity of the credulous Hindu pilgrims and win reverence from them. The banyan tree marking the approach to the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill and the wonderful mango-tree praised in the Gayā-māhātmya, have perished long ago. But the far-famed *Akshaya-vaṭa* standing close to the temple of Prapitā-maheśvara has somehow maintained its living identity. The ancient tank of Gayā, known by the name of Brahma-sara or Brahmakuṇḍa and once noted for its hot-spring waters, can still be seen at the foot of the Pretaśīlā hill and serves still as a bathing place for the thousands of pilgrims who visit Gayā throughout the year. The hundreds and

thousands of Hindu pilgrims come every year from all parts of India to pay off their solemn debt to the deceased forefathers and to make the place a positive nuisance and dirty hell. In spite of their miserable earthly condition, the Brahmins of Gayā continue to enjoy the highest place and derive their income from the fees offered by the pilgrims. Despite the erection of mosques and Christian chapels, modern *Dak banglows* and courts of law, the city of Gayā retains its original character as a Hindu holy land with the lines of communication similar almost to those of yore.

Uruvelā, too, appears even now as the same sandy tract with its plain surface and open spaces. The same Nairañjanā still flows down towards the north presenting a beautiful landscape view, and is still remarkable for its sunny beaches and crystal waters. The spot of the Bo-tree is still the same sombre woodland in the heart of the tract of Uruvelā, and is still situated in the immediate neighbourhood of Senānīgāma, the modern village of Urel. The Mahābodhi is still the same holy site where the great Bo *Aśvattha* lords it over. The site itself is still surrounded by an enclosure and shines forth with great many a shrine. The sacred area of the Bodhimaṇḍa is still connected by the same high road that extended along the western bank of the Nairañjanā, and the distance, too, remains practically the same. Though the Jaṭilas have lost their foothold long ago, the Śaiva ascetics, their present-day descendants, are still the masters of the situation. One can say that the ancient three divisions of Gayā, Nadī and Uruvelā have formed at present two well-defined sacred areas, the Brahma-Gayā and the Buddha-Gayā, the former predominated by the shrines of Hindu

worship and the latter by those of Buddhist worship; the former representing the eternal domain of the *Akshaya-vaṭa* and the latter that of the Bo-tree *Aśvattha.*

The *Vaṭa* or *Nyagrodha* and the *Aśvattha* or *Pippala* are the two well-known species of the Indian *Ficus Religiosa.* Of these, the former finds mention in the edicts of King Aśoka as the recognized type of all shady trees.[1] Such shady trees were planted by the great Maurya king on the high roads at uniform distances to provide cool shade for both men and animals.[2] Resting place was arranged for and drinking water supplied under those trees to render relief and comfort to the travellers, weary and thirsty.[3] The wells were sunk and the tanks excavated, and the mango and other fruit-gardens laid out, and the charity-halls put up near by to quench the thirst and appease the hunger of the passers-by.[4]

In all these acts of piety the Buddhist emperor emulated just the noble fame of his predecessors, the former kings of India,[5]—the monarchs who had reigned in the long past and during many hundred years.[6] And he eagerly wished

[1] We mean that the term *Nigoha* (*Nyagrodha*) is used in a generic sense to signify all the available shady trees.

[2] R.E. II: *Paṃthesu kūpā* (*udupānā*) *khānāpitā vrachā ca ropāpitā paribhogāya pasumunisānaṃ.* P.E. VII: *Magesu pi Nigohāni lopāpitāni chhāyopagāni hosaṃ iīti pasu-munisānaṃ.*

[3] The term *kūpa* or *udupāna,* too, is used in a generic sense to signify wells, tanks and the like. Cf. *Sāratthа-pakāsinī,* Siamese Ed., Part I, p. 107: *Udapānanti yaṃ kiñchi pokkharaṇi-taḷākādi.*

[4] P.E. VII: *aṃbā-vaḍikyā lopāpitā, aḍhakosikyāni udupānāni khānāpitāni niṃ-sidhiyā cha kālāpitāni paṭibhogāya pasu-munisānaṃ.* Cf. also the Queen's Edict.

[5] P.E. VII: *Vividhāyā hi sukhāyanāya pulimehi pi lājīhi mamayā cha sukhayite loke.*

[6] For the meaning of the term *pulimehi lājīhi* see R.E. IV, R.E. V, R.E. VII, R.E. VIII and P.E. VII

that the examples set or the instructions left by him should be followed by his sons and grandsons and other descendants, nay, the whole of posterity, as long as the sun and the moon lasted or the present world-system continued to exist.[1] One might say that he did not cherish this wish in vain. For, as clearly borne out by the evidence of some of the Purāṇas, these philanthropic deeds became but a common expression of general Hindu piety.[2] Thus indeed one can seek to establish that to a Hindu the *Vaṭa* or *Nyagrodha* is primarily a living symbol of utility and philanthropy.

As regards the *Aśvattha* or *Pippala*, one cannot but be interested to find that it figures throughout ancient Indian literature as a sacred symbol of life and its growth and possibilities. Although in all of the texts the name of *Aśvattha* or *Pippala* has not been expressly mentioned, by a careful comparison of those in which it is mentioned by name[3] with those in which it is not[4] one may convincingly show that the intended tree is no other than it. In the

[1] Cf. R.E. IV, R.E. V and P.E VII.

[2] *Bahṇi-Purāṇa*, Taḍāga-vṛiksha-praśaṃsā-nāmādhyāya :
Vṛiksha-gulma-latā-vallyastvaksārāstṛiṇa-jātaya |
shaḍ ete vṛikshajātīyās tāsām rope phalaṃ śṛiṇu ||
Yaḥ pumān ropayed vṛikshān chhāyā-pushpa-phalopagān |
sarvasāropabhogāya sa yāti paramāṃ gatim ||

Cf. *Padma-Purāṇa*, Sṛishṭikāṇḍa, Ch. 26 : *Vṛiksha-ropaṇaṃ*. Similarly one may read with profit the Buddhist *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, Part I, Devatā-saṃyutta, Sutta No. 8, for the Buddha's praise of *ārāma-ropā* and *vana-ropā* as a highly efficacious act of merit. Buddhaghosha explains the term *vana-ropā* as meaning : *Chhāyupage rukkhe ropetvā dadamānāpi vana-ropā yeva nāma*. Read also Raghunandana's *Vṛikshapratishṭhā-tattva*.

[3] *Kaṭha Upanishad*, VI. 1 ; *Bhagavadgītā*, XV. 1-3.

[4] *RV*, I. 164. 20-22 ; *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, III. 1 ; *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, III. 9 ; *Mbh.*, Aśvamedhaparva, *Anugītā*, XXXV. 20-23.

Kaṭha Upanishad[1] and the Bhagavadgītā[2] the evolution of life has been illustrated by the *Aśvattha* tree, eternal and undecaying, with its root above and branches below (*ūrdhvamūlaḥ adhaḥśākhaḥ*). "The tree was certainly held in high esteem even as early as the Vedic poems. Vessels for the mystic Soma cult were made of its wood ; and so were the caskets containing the medicinal herbs used in the mystic craft of the physician of the day. The upper portion in the fire-drill............was of the *Pippal* tree. And in one passage the tree in heaven under which the souls of the blessed recline is likened to a *Pippal*."[3] It is undoubtedly the *Aśvattha* or *Pippala* which in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad symbolises the tree of life whereon perch two charming birds and dwell as inseparable comrades, one of which eats its fruits and the other simply looks on and ponders over without eating anything.[4] The same symbolisation by the *Aśvattha* or *Pippala* of life, characterised by its two different trends or tendencies or dispositions, vital and reflective, finds a marvellous poetical expression even in so ancient a Vedic hymn as that attributed to Ṛishi Dīrghatamas in the first Maṇḍala of the Ṛigveda.[5] As some of

[1] *Kaṭha*, VI. 1:
Ūrdhvamūlo'vākśākha esho'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ |

[2] Bhagavadgītā, XV. 1
Urdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvattham prāhur avyayam |
chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni yas taṃ veda sa vedavit ||

[3] *Buddhist India*, pp. 231-232. Zimmer's *Alt indisches Leben*, p. 58.

[4] *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, III. 1.

[5] *RV.*, I. 22. 164. 20 :
Dvā Suparṇā Sayujā Sakhāyā Samānāṃ Vrikshaṃ paripasvajāte |
tayor anyaḥ pippalaṃ svadvattyanaśnam anyo abhichākaśīti ||

"Two birds of beautiful wings,—comrades intimately related to each other, are perching on the same tree ; one of the two tastes of the sweet fruit while the other simply looks on without eating anything."

the earthen seals unearthed at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, clearly attests, the actual artistic representation of some such symbolism, pregnant with meaning, is as old as 3000 B.C.,[1] and none need be surprised if this is a striking relic of a long-forgotten Indian civilisation which is on a par with, if not decisively anterior to, the Sumerian.

In the popular estimation of Bengal the *Vaṭa* (Banyan) excels all other trees in the coolness and magnitude of its shade (*chhāyāśreshṭha Vaṭ*), while the *Aśvattha* (Pippal) excels all other trees in the high sanctity of its being (*taru-śresṭha Aśvattha*). The Bhagavadgītā, too, accords the highest place to the Aśvattha among all the trees for its divine sanctity.[2] The distinction between the two is relative only and by no means absolute. Just as, on the one hand, the shady trees typified by the *Vaṭa* or *Nyagrodha* do not exclude the *Aśvattha* or *Pippala*, so, on the other, the sacred trees typified by the latter do not preclude the former. As a matter of fact, to a Hindu both of them are highly sacred, the former as a living form of Rudra and the latter as a living form of Vishṇu.[3]

A retrospect of the history of the Gayā region most palpably brings us home to the fact that the *Vaṭa* has invariably served as the outstanding symbol of Brahmanical Hinduism and the *Aśvattha* that of popular Buddhism. The same

[1] *The London Illustrated News*, Feb. 27, 1926, p. 346 Fig. 2.

[2] *Bhagavadgītā*
Ahaṃ sarva-vṛikshāṇām Aśvatthaḥ |

[3] *Padma-Purāṇa*, *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, Ch. CLX :
Kathaṃ tvayāśvatthavaṭau go-brāhmaṇa-samau kṛitau |
sarvebhyo'pi tarubhyastau kathaṃ pūjyatamau kṛitau ||
Aśvattharūpo bhagavān Vishṇur eva na saṃśayaḥ |
Rudrarūpo Vaṭas tadvat............ ||

distinction of the sylvan symbols between the two faiths did not remain confined within the limits of the region of enquiry; it is discernible in the long array of traditions of sacred places connected with the two faiths. The prominence enjoyed by the Banyan over the Hindu *tirthas* in general is clearly borne out by the fact that the Vaishṇava tradition of the Yamunā-tīrtha alone sanctifies the glory of the reign of some sixteen varieties of the *Vaṭa.*[1] And, on the other hand, the pre-eminence of the Pippal in Buddhism is such that the history of the rise of all Buddhist holy places, both in and outside India, may be read in no better term than that of the planting of the seed or branch of the Bo.

It is by mere accident that the *Aśvattha* became the Bo-tree of the historical Buddha. As Bo-trees of previous Buddhas, the *Nyagrodha* and a number of other trees—the *Udumbara*, the *Puṇḍarīka* (*Plakshma*) and the rest—have figured in the legends and sculptures of Buddhism as special symbols and objects of worship. It is not difficult to show that all these legendary Bo-trees sacred to Buddhism are but particular types of a variety of trees that enjoyed high sanctity in the eye of the Hindus. In actuality, however, none but the Bo-tree of the historical Buddha has been venerated by the Buddhists as a pre-eminent object of worship or a prominent emblem of their faith. And

1 *Padma-Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa*:
Vrajamaṇḍalābhyantarīṇa-Vaṭasaṃjñaka-shoḍaśavanāni ....
Saṅketavaṭādyā Yamunāyāś chaturaśītikrośa-maryādāntare dakshiṇottara-taṭayoḥ shoḍaśavanāni.

Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa in his *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* names the sixteen varieties as follows:

Saṅketa, Bhāṇḍīra, Yāvaka, Sriṅgāra, Vaṃśa, Srī, Jaṭājuṭa, Kāma, Manotha, Āśā, Nāmakeli, Nāmabrudra, Srīdhara and *Sāvitra.*

whatever the actual tree representing the Bo, the differential element in Buddhism lies in its strong tendency to restrict its worship and its symbolism to a particular tree and its offshoots and descendants. That is to say, all the Pippals or all the Banyans are not indiscriminately sacred to Buddhism but only those which are directly or indirectly associated with the life of a Buddha, particularly with the event of Buddhahood.

So far as the region of Gayā is concerned, even at Buddha-Gayā the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* reigned supreme just in the midst of such *Nyagrodhas* of earlier fame as the Ajapāla, and the one standing as a living sanctuary to the village of Senānigāma, while at Brahma-Gayā both the *Akshayavaṭa* and the *Gridhrakūṭa* became associated with the worship of Śiva-Maheśvara. Rarely indeed the Banyan appears even now as a tree sacred to Śiva-Mahādev, while in a large majority of cases Śaivism has monopolised the *Aśvattha*. Though the historian may be tempted here to interpret the Śaiva monopoly of the *Aśvattha* as a patent case of aggressiveness, none should lose sight of the fact that Śaivism has in its essential character remained ever loyal to the spirit of Brahmanical Hinduism and differed from Buddhism by its main tendency to attribute religious sanctity to all the *Aśvatthas* without limiting it to a particular *Aśvattha* or a particular *Nyagrodha* because of its living association with a great historical event.

The point of Buddhism must not, however, be misunderstood. For, even assuming that standardisation of form by a singular object, *e.g.*, the Bo-tree Aśvattha as here, and the particularisation of notable objects are the charac-

teristic features of popular Buddhism, we may observe at the same time that it has not missed the practical importance of similar other objects representing its historical background and changing social surroundings. It has allowed, may be by way of sufferance granted to them, the *Vaṭa*, the *Ḍumbura*, the *Śāla*, the *Śirīsha* and the rest of the venerated trees to co-exist, nay, to thrive along with the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* either as Bo-trees of the illustrious predecessors and successors of the historical Buddha or as trees associated with the career of the Buddha both prior and posterior to the event of Buddhahood. Emphasizing the importance of the particular *Aśvattha* as a Bo-tree of the last and greatest known Buddha it has just served to bring once more into prominence the ancient Tree of Life, the religious symbol of a long-forgotten Sumerian-like Indian civilisation in the two buried cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. Truly indeed has the following utterance been put into the mouth of the Buddha in the famous Nagara-Sutta :

"As a man, brethren, wandering in the forest, in the mountain-jungle, might see an ancient path, an ancient road, trodden by men of an earlier age ; and following it, might discover an ancient township, an ancient palace, the habitation of men of an earlier age, surrounded by park and grove and lotus-pool and walls, a delightful spot ; and that man were to go back, and announce to the king or his minister : Behold, Sir, and learn what I have seen ! And, having told him, he were to invite the king to rebuild the city, and that city were to become anon flourishing and populous and wealthy once more :—Even so, brethren, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, trodden by Buddhas of a

by-gone age............the which having followed I understand life and its coming to be and its passing away. And thus understanding I have declared the same to the fraternity and to the laity."[1]

The rise of the Bo-tree into importance is itself a striking phenomenon in the history of Buddhism. As pointed out by the late Prof. Rhys Davids,[2] so far as the whole corpus of the Pāli Piṭakan texts goes, it is nowhere but in the solitary Mahāpadāna Suttanta that the Bo-trees of seven Buddhas, including *Aśvattha*, the Bo-tree of the last Buddha, find an incidental mention. The way in which they are introduced shows that they are nothing as yet but so many passing shadows. The Suttanta seeks, no doubt, to inculcate a general rule, namely, that the association of a fortunate tree with the momentous event of Buddhahood is universally true in the case of all the Buddhas. No special sanctity is attached, however, to these trees. There is no exaggerated description of their majesty and glory. Buddhaghosha's commentary on the Suttanta in question shows altogether a changed state of things. The Pāli commentator has gladly devoted several pages to descriptions of the peculiar majesty of the Bo-trees, the symmetry of their heights and the beauty of their foliages. A similar change in the Buddhist attitude towards the sylvan symbols of Buddhahood is equally borne out by descriptions in the Jātaka-Nidāna-kathā, the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu.[3] A long interval of time elapsed between the passing

[1] *Buddhism* by Mrs. Rhys Davids, pp. 33-34.

[2] *Buddhist India*, p. 310.

mention in the original Suttanta and the later commentarial descriptions. In between the two one has to take note of artistic delineations of the scenes of Buddhahood in the Buddhist bas-reliefs at Barhut, Sanchi, Bodh-Gayā and other places, particularly those at Barhut. There can be no denying of the fact that art with the trees in motif exercised a potent influence on popular mind and served ultimately to bring about great changes both in literature and in the form of worship.

As for the Barhut bas-reliefs dealing with the subject of Buddhahood, each of them "contains a special scene of worship and perambulation on the historic spot of the enlightenment of a Buddha, the living memory of which is hallowed by the presence of a cubical jewel-seat of stone, called Bodhimaṇḍa or Vajrāsana, and that of a Bodhi-tree, *Pāṭali*, *Puṇḍarīka*, *Śāla*, *Śirīsha*, *Dumbura*, *Nyagrodha* or *Aśvattha*, with flower-garlands hanging from its branches and joints, bunches of fruits or flowers adorning its well-shaped foliage, and umbrellas serving as canopies at the top. The seat is a representation of the one upon which a Buddha was seated cross-legged........and saw the light and obtained the bliss. The tree is a representation of the one at the foot of which a Buddha became a Buddha. The seat of stone is symbolical of the firmness of the will to do or die, to conquer and transcend. Its cubical shape is reminiscent of the Vedic altar which was a geometrical representation of the four-sided earth as known to the ancients. The jewel-ornament distinguishes it as a work of art from the ordinary cubical heap of earth attached to a woodland-shrine. The tree is the one which is associated in the popular superstition

with demoniac possession (*yaksha-parigraha*) and spirit-haunting (*devatādhivāsa*). The flower-garlands replace the pieces of linen thread or cloth tied round and suspended from the tree as the sign of promise for making offerings on the fulfilment of wishes. The offerings consist of flowers and fruits as distinguished from the bloody sacrifices, including the slaughter of human beings and staining the sacred altar. The umbrellas indicate the royal majesty of the tree which reigns on the spot as the very lord of the forest. The well-shaped foliage and shady bower of the trim-boughed tree are indicative of the greatness of the Buddha and his religion as the true shelter or refuge for the afflicted humanity and other beings. The scene of worship is enlivened by the aroma of celestial fragrance and the presence of the heavenly beings. Here is a joyous situation in the midst of serene calm, where earth and heaven, gods and men, kings and peasants, men and women, and the high and the low meet, pay homage and participate in a common worship. The worshippers have a noble demeanour and a calm disposition. They are gently dressed, their behaviour is courtier-like, and their kneeling attitude and mode of salutation are heroic or warrior-like. The element of fear or the love of gain inducing the common people to make offerings is sought to be dispensed with by creating a changed situation and a new historical association where the usurping demons and the indwelling spirits themselves are busy protecting the sanctuary consecrating the treasured memory of the highest human triumph. The spot is the very navel of the earth,—the greatest centre of human attraction which is well-protected by the kings with walls, towers and ramparts

and marked with a monumental stone-pillar. The sanctuary is technically a *Pāribhogika-chetiya*, enshrining as it does the objects actually enjoyed or used by a Buddha, and are, therefore, inseparably associated with his life and memory. The seat is vacant because the enshrinement is merely that of an historical association, which is not a natural thing or corporeal embodiment. The worship, introduced just to meet the urgent popular demand, is yet based upon an earlier injunction occurring, for instance, in the introductory discourse and anecdote of the Kāliṅga-bodhi-Jātaka (Fausböll, No. 479). In later times the Buddha image appeared indeed, enshrined on the earlier vacant throne, and conceding to the similar popular demand for a concrete form for worship; the concession was made, though the enshrined image was not at all meant to stand as a bust or statue but only as an objective reference (*uddesika*), created by imagination (*manamattaka*),—an ideal form having no positive background (*avatthuka*), the art making the human shape just a mode of the mind's expression........the exalted mode of religious homage is based upon that hero-worship which is the most primitive and universal element in all religions."[1]

Now by whatever actual historical process the Bo-tree of the last known Buddha came into prominence, when it was offered as an object of worship to the mass of Hindu people, it was welcome to them as it appeared in no other form than *Aśvattha*, their ancient and highly revered Tree of Life. If the Buddhists wanted to present the same as a Tree of Wisdom, it was all the more welcome to them because

[1] See our monograph—*Barhut*, Book I, Art. 59, loc. *cit.*

they were taught long ago to believe that in wisdom lay the fruition of life. If Buddhist tradition supplied a new association of enlightenment of the human mind, they were quite prepared to venerate it as *Bodhi-druma*, and if Buddhist art and literature heightened its majesty and beauty as a lord of the trees, they were equally prepared to praise it as *Aśvattha-rājā* without finding anything to do violence to their own inherited beliefs and practices. The ready acceptance of the Bo-tree as an additional object of worship enabled them to include Bodh-Gayā in their Holy Land in a more well-defined manner, and to them the holy region of Gayā presented at one end the Undying Banyan and at the other Bo-tree *Aśvattha* as distinct objects of worship. The general run of Hindu people found nothing strange in the cynosure of Buddhism, nothing that did not command ready acceptance. So there was nothing to prevent them from counting the Buddhist Tree of Wisdom and the Buddhist sanctuary at Bodh-Gayā among the important *vedis* to be visited by them.

Thus the two domains, one of the Undying Banyan and the other of the Bo-tree *Aśvattha*, met to complete the Hindu Holy Land, the sacred region of Gayā, just in the same way that the two hill-streams, the Nilājan of Buddhist fame and the Mohānā of Brahmin fame, met to flow together as the Phalgu and enjoy sanctity greater than that of the Ganges. The main difference between the two domains may be understood thus: in the one the natural features, namely, the sombre hills with their rugged appearance and the Phalgu with its wide expanse predominate over human artmanship, and in the other the work of art, namely, the

Bodh-Gayā temple with its towering height gives its stamp to the whole of its natural surroundings. Brahmanical Hinduism resolves itself into pure nature-worship and is lavish in the praise of the divine in nature external, and Buddhism resolves itself into pure mind-worship and is lavish in the praise of the divine of divine in nature internal. And both these tendencies worked together to mould the life of modern Hinduism.

With the Hindus the antiquity of Gayā is to be determined in terms of the age of the rocky hills, the hot springs and the hill-streams. Barring the singular aboriginal rude structure of stone, the watch-tower-shaped Yaksha-temple *Taṃ-kita-mañcha*, mentioned in the early records of Buddhism, and the Vṛishabhadhvaja on the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill, mentioned in the Great Epic, there is hardly any other ancient work of human skill to be noted by the historian of Brahma-Gayā. Most of the existing temples at Gayā proper were built and most of the existing tanks excavated during the reign of the later Pālas and after; most of the available inscriptions, too, belong to this very period of time. For a connected history of the life of the Gayā region in terms of the handiworks of art and the epigraphic records one must turn one's attention to Buddha-Gayā and Buddhism. Thus the large gap between the *avyakta* (potential, merely rocky) and the *vyakta* (fully iconic) stages of the manifestation of the Hindu divinity of Gayā is filled up by the records of developments at Buddha-Gayā.

It is not without some justification on its side that Buddhism has made a lordly *Aśvattha* as the outstanding symbol of its glory. For, just as the *Aśvattha* represents

the tree of life, the symbol of vitality, so Buddhism may be justly taken to represent the dynamic energy and expansive force of the Indo-Aryan culture, broadly termed Hinduism. Buddhism is not, however, the only movement of its kind; there are several other movements from time to time that were intended to expand the closed but elastic curve of the Indo-Aryan life to such an extent that it might ultimately include in it the whole of humanity and all types of civilisation. The earlier movements progressed enough to Hinduise almost the whole of India even before the reign of King Aśoka. In his Thirteenth Rock Edict, the great Maurya emperor emphatically says that at the time of the promulgation of this particular record there was no other place in the whole of India but the Yona province of his empire where the various sects of the Indian *religieux*, the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas, could not be found, and the inhabitants of which were not devoted to one or the other or to all of them. As pointed out elsewhere,[1] Buddhism as a new movement was till that time confined within the territorial limits of the Middle Country as known to the Buddhists; even as regards the Middle Country, Buddhism was to be found where it might be found and not to be found where it might not be found (*yattha atthi tattha atthi, yattha n'atthi tattha n'atthi*). Tradition credits King Aśoka with the despatch of Buddhist missions north, south, east and west, to places outside the Middle Country, to the Himalayan tracts in the north, the Yavana-tract in the north-west, the Aparānta in the west, Vanavāsī, Mahishamaṇḍala (Mysore) and Tāmraparṇi (Ceylon) in the south, and Suvarṇabhūmi in the east or north-east.

[1] Barua's *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, p. 261.

The success of these missions is proved by the formation of a number of local sects whose names and views are met with in the writings of Vasumitra. Buddhaghosha and others, such sects as the Haimavata, the Uttarāpathaka, the Vājriya, the Āndhraka, the Pūrvaśaila and the Aparaśaila. In his R. E. XIII, the Buddhist emperor says that the laws and practices of piety and morality as promulgated by him found a ready acceptance throughout his own dominions as well as in the outlying territories, the principalities of his five Greek allies in the north-west, the countries of Chola, Chera and Pāṇḍya in the south, even as far south as Tāmraparṇi, within the reaches of his emissaries and within the length and breadth of six hundred leagues. With regard to the regions beyond the reach of his envoys as well, he firmly believed that even the inhabitants of those places would welcome those laws and practices when they would come to know of them through some agency. His prophecy came true and his expectation was fulfilled. For within a few centuries from his death Buddhism became the predominant religion of the greater portion of Asia,—of Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, Ceylon, Java, Siam and Burma. With the wider and wider propagation of the norm of his faith expanded the domain of the *Sambodhi*,—the Bo-tree *Aśvattha*, and extended as well the circle of the imperishable Banyan symbolising humanitarian spirit and philanthropic deeds of the Hindu people. So in his R. E. II, the great Maurya ruler proclaims with pride :

"Throughout my own dominions, in the countries of Chola, Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra, Keralaputra, as far (south) as Tāmraparṇi, and (no less) in the principalities of Antiochus

and four other (Greek) allies, I have arranged for two kinds of treatment, one suitable for men and the other for animals. Medicinal plants have been supplied and the roots and fruits planted where these are not available. The shady trees have been planted on the roads and watery places excavated for the benefit of both men and animals."

Thus Buddhism has, in course of its enthusiastic march for conquest by the *dhamma*, widened the sphere of Hindu life and deepened its significance; it has expanded the Hindu heart and broadened the Hindu outlook; and, above all, awakened consciousness among the Hindu people of their true greatness that lies in the fulfilment of all higher and lower duties, the consciousness which has found its fitting expression in a *śloka* of Manu's Code:

Etad-deśa-prasutasya sakāśād agrajanmanaḥ |
svaṃ svaṃ charitraṃ śiksheran prithivyāṃ sarvamānavāḥ||[1]

"Let all men of this earth come to learn the ideal of conduct befitting them from the foremost amongst those born in this sacred land."

Buddhism has nowhere struck a discordant or jarring note, and never offered a norm which is unpalatable or unacceptable to the Hindus and the civilised humanity of any country. The central idea in the Hindu cult of *piṇḍa*-offering at Gayā and other places is the payment of the debt of gratitude to the parents and other predecessors who mould our life in different ways. Apparently there can be no grander conception of civilised life than that we begin it in the sense of triple debts, the debts that we owe to the *Pitṛis*, the *Ṛishis* and the *Devas*. One will look through

[1] *Manu-saṃhitā*, II. 20.

all the records of Aśoka only to be convinced that there is hardly any record in which the good king has not harped on the supreme need of proper attention to parents, proper attention to superiors, proper attention to elders, seemly behaviour towards all the teachers and ministers of religion, kind treatment to slaves and servants, humane action towards the aged and destitute, and tender regard for all forms of life as a means of growth of higher humanity. As a matter of fact, the Buddhist emperor has, in one of his edicts, proclaimed all these essential duties as a categorical imperative dictated by the ancient or eternal impulse of civilised nature (*esā porāṇā pakiti*).[1]

There is nothing in Aśoka's *Dhamma* which is not either inspired by nor may be shown to be wholly consistent with the teachings of the Buddha. The gospel truth with the Buddhist emperor indeed was: "All that is taught by the Buddha is well-taught" (*e kechi bhagavatā budhena bhāsite save se subhāsite vā*).[2] Whether in the Siṅgālovāda-Sutta, where the Buddha is represented as laying down a whole programme of duties of a cultured householder, or in the Mahāmaṅgala and other Discourses, where he is represented as summing up these duties, in short, wherever there was an occasion for pronouncement of his opinion on the subject, he has tried to heighten the importance of respectful attention to parents, teachers and other superiors,[3] and proper discharge of duties to wife, children, friends, relatives, acquaintances, slaves and servants,—to all persons by whom a householder is surrounded in his daily life.

1 M.R.E., II.

2 *Bhabru Edict.*

3 *Dīgha-Nikāya*, Vol. III, pp. 191-192.

The common burden of most of the mediæval inscriptions at Bodh-Gayā is :

"Let whatever merit may be in this (recorded act of mine) serve for the benefit of mother and father, to begin with, for the benefit of teachers, preceptors (and others), and (ultimately) for the attainment of the fruit of supreme knowledge by the whole multitude of all sentient beings."[1]

Can there be any doubt that in this spontaneous and burning expression of a truly human heart the Hindu practice of *piṇḍa*-offering has found its fullest recognition and gained in its spiritual significance ?

Buddhism did not create beliefs as to the existence of a spirit-world and the miseries and utter helplessness of spirit-life.[2] The beliefs were already there among the people to whose need the new religion had to minister :

Tirokuḍḍesu tiṭṭhanti sandhi-siṅghāṭakesu cha |
dvārabāhāsu tiṭṭhanti āgantvāna sakaṃ gharaṃ ||
Pahūte annapānamhi khajja-bhojje upaṭṭhite |
na tesaṃ kochi sarati sattānaṃ kammapachchayā ||
Na hi tattha kasi atthi, gorakkh'etha na vijjati |
vaṇijjā tādisī n'atthi hiraññena kayakkayaṃ ||
ito dinnena yāpenti petā kālakatā tahiṃ ||[3]

"The departed spirits stand beyond the outer walls, or where the four cross-roads meet, and even by the door-post when they revisit their old home. When abundant quantity of food and drink, both hard and soft, is provided

[1] *IA*, Vol. X, p. 346 :
Yadatra puṇyaṃ tad bhavatu-āchāryopā-dhyāya-mātā-pitṛi-pūrvvaṅgamaṃ kṛitvā sakalasatvarāśer anuttara-jnānaphalāvaptaya iti.

[2] B. C. Law's *Buddhist Conception of Spirits*, pp. 1-2.

[3] *Petavatthu*, I. 5, verses 1-2, 6-7.

for a feast, no one remembers them—such is their woeful lot brought about by their past misdeeds.

There is to be found neither agriculture nor cattle-rearing; there is likewise no commercial transaction or bartering with gold and silver. They spend their days in the state of woe with whatever is poured down from here."

Without doing violence to these beliefs Buddhism gave a new turn to them and fully utilised them as a means of diverting the course of sorrow and lamentation over the death of dear and near ones by instructing the people to do the very best thing they can do for the benefit of the departed spirits, and that in such a manner that along with doing great honour to the departed spirits, the function of offering gifts will serve as a cordial social expression to kinsmen who are alive and a source of strength to the religious institution.[1]

The contemporary Brahmanical literature goes to show that *pitṛi-yajña* or formal offering of rice-cakes to the deceased forefathers came to be recognized as one of the five sacred functions in the life of an Aryan householder.[2] The Buddha readily accorded sanction to this time-honoured practice, recognizing it to be one of the five main obligations of a cultured householder.[3]

According to the usage of Hindu law, the duty of offering *piṇḍas* to the deceased forefathers was obligatory on the part of the inheritor of ancestral properties. To this custom,

[1] *Tirokuḍḍa-Sutta*, verses 10-12.

[2] Āśvalāyana Gṛihya-Sūtra, III. 1. 3. 1-2:
Athātaḥ panchayajñāḥ: Deva-yajño Bhūtayajñaḥ pitṛiyajño brahmayajño manushyayajña iti.

[3] *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, Part III, p. .

too, the Buddha gave his sanction in unequivocal terms: "The son (prospective heir) must make it a point of duty to offer *dakshiṇā* in honour of the departed spirits of his forefathers and to inherit the ancestral properties."[1] In all such matters of moment the definite principle of the Buddha was not to disturb or upset the long-established custom. So in connection with the Vrijis of Vaiśāli he is represented as giving out this opinion: "So long as the members of a nation will not (forcibly) seek to establish that which is not well-established (as a custom), and will not (rashly) upset that which is long established (as a custom), so long they may be expected to prosper and not to decline."[2]

Where the question of national welfare was involved, the Buddha did never think it prudent to demolish the existing shrines or to disturb the course of common worship. So again in connection with the Vrijis of Vaiśāli he is represented as saying: "So long as the members of a nation will continue to pay due honour, reverence, respect and homage to whatever shrines of their own there be, within and without, and will not allow to fall into dissuetude the offerings made and granted to them before out of faith, so long they may be expected to prosper and not to decline."[3]

[1] *Siṅgālovāda-Sutta, Dīgha-Nikāya,* Vol. III, p. 189:

Dāyajjaṃ paṭipajjāmi, atha 'cha pana petānaṃ kālakatānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ anuppadassāmi.

[2] *Mahāparinibbāna-Suttanta,* Dīgha-Nikāya, Vol. II, p. 74:

Yāvakīvañ cha, Ānanda, Vajjī appaññattaṃ na paññāpessanti, paññattaṃ na samucchindissanti, vuḍḍhi yeva, Ānanda, Vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni.

[3] *Mahāparinibbāna-Suttanta, Dīgha-Nikāya,* Vol. II, p. 75:

Yāvakīvañ cha, Ānanda, Vajjī yāni tāni Vajjīnaṃ Vajjī chetiyāni, abbhantarāni ch 'eva bāhirāni cha, tāni sakkarissanti garukarissanti mānessanti pūjessanti tesan cha dinnapubbaṃ katapubbaṃ dhammikaṃ baliṃ no parihāpessanti vuḍḍhi yeva, Ānanda, Vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā no parihāni.

It is then quite in keeping with the spirit of the Buddha's teaching that the course of religious life of Gayā proper has been left undisturbed by the votaries of Buddhism. The city of Gayā draws every year, even till now, millions of Hindu pilgrims from different parts of India as it did two thousand and five hundred years back. These pilgrims come with a view to offering *piṇḍas* for the release of their deceased forefathers from the woes of spirit-life and washing away their sins by bathing in the sacred waters of the Phalgu and the tanks of Gayā. The ingrained idea of paying off the triple debts impels them to visit the place and even to tolerate the ugly conduct of the Gayāwāls and their agents. They visit Bodh-Gayā and worship the Bo-tree and the Buddha-image with this very purpose. Śree Gaurāṅga is the greatest known among the earlier Hindu pilgrims to the holy city of Gayā. If the facts recorded in the Chaitanya-bhāgavata concerning Gaurāṅga's pilgrimage to Gayā be true, even so great a Vaishṇava reformer as Gaurāṅga faithfully obeyed the Hindu custom of *piṇḍa*-offering.

The Hindu ceremony of *Piṇḍa*-offering is, after all, a very simple affair, which needs no elaborate preparation and is within the means of all. On all days, in all seasons and under all circumstances the Gayā-ceremony may be performed. No formal invocation of the *Pitṛis* is necessary, nor is there any fear of an evil eye. The prescribed formula of *Piṇḍa*-offering requires the devout Hindu pilgrim to define, first of all, the range of the universe with which he is to establish a cordial relation of his human heart through his act of piety :

Ābrahma-stamvaparyantaṃ devarshi-pitṛi-mānavāḥ |
tṛipyantu pitaraḥ sarve mātṛi-mātāmahādayaḥ||
Atīta-kula-koṭīnāṃ saptadvīpa-nivāsināṃ |
ābrahmabhuvanāl lokād idam astu tilodakam||

"From the highest to the lowest point, as far as extends the universe, let all divine sages and patriarchs, all deceased forefathers, both on the side of father and mother, be propitiated. Let this humble offering of *tilodaka* go to benefit the whole world from the highest heaven down to this earth,—to benefit all the inhabitants of the seven continents who belonged to crores of families in the past."

After this the devout pilgrim is required to repeat the appropriate formulas as he separately offers *tiloduka* for the release of the departed spirits with whom he is directly or indirectly connected and in whose welfare he may be supposed to be personally interested. The list of recipients includes not only those who have died in his own family or own direct line, not only those who have died in the family of his maternal grandfather, not only those who have died in the families of his teacher and father-in-law, not only those who were his kinsmen, but all those whom he can remember at the moment, whether kinsmen or not.

Though the germ of the idea is there, so far as the actual expression goes, there is no funeral ritual in the Vedic texts which comes so near to the *tarpaṇa-mantra* in the later Gayā-Eulogium as the following formula of *metta-bhāvanā* (cultivation of friendliness) prescribed in early Buddhism :

Ye kechi pāṇabhūt' atthi tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā |
dīghā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā rassakā aṇukathulā||

diṭṭhā vā ye vā adiṭṭhā ye cha dūre vasanti avidūre |
bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā||[1]

"Whosoever may be classed as living beings, whether weak or strong, leaving none aside, whether of long size, or of large dimension, or of medium size, or of short stature, whether small or large, whether visible or invisible; whether to be found near at hand or far off, whether actually born or are to be born, let all beings be happy (and live in safety)."

Though a mental practice,[2] the prescribed formula may have a good deal to do with the formulation of the *tarpaṇa-mantra* in modern Hinduism.

Thus here again we may clearly see that there was no conflict in essence between Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism. These, like the two great hill-streams of the Gayā region, combined to flow together and form a far wider expanse in modern Hinduism.

The attainment of Buddhahood by the Buddha proved to be an epoch-making event in history. The pilgrimage undertaken by King Aśoka to pay his worship in honour of the great Bo-tree, the then known living witness of Buddhahood of the Buddha, proved a great incentive to the lasting work of piety done by those who copied his example. But for the impetus given by King Aśoka it is doubtful if the region of Gayā would have risen into world-wide importance. Whoever the actual builders of the numerous votive shrines, none need be astonished to see that the fame of the builder of Bodh-Gayā shrine is still enjoyed by the pioneer

[1] *Mettasutta* in the *Sutta-Nipāta* and the *Khuddakapāṭha*.

[2] This is clearly indicated in one of the closing stanzas of the *Mettasutta*:
Evam pi sabbabhūtesu mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ |

in the field (*ādikara*). As a happy result of his action, Bodh-Gayā has become to the Buddhists what the hill of Golgotha is to the Christians and Mecca to the Muhammadans.

The Jātaka-Nidāna-kathā has invested the Bo-tree *Aśvattha* with a miraculous power and says that when this tree swayed to the east or to the west, to the north or to the south, it touched the farthest reach of the horizon. The description, as it is, is nothing but a poetical exaggeration. This is nevertheless historically true in the sense that many devout pilgrims have flocked to the glorious spot of the Bo-tree from the four cardinal points and even from places far beyond the geographical limits of India. We may safely leave aside those who came from different parts of India and even those who hailed from Ceylon and Burma and think only of those who came from China and Korea beyond it. The shrine of Mahābodhi was visited by Fa-Hian and Hwen Thsang from China who have left important notices of the place in their travels, and Chi-I I, Kwei-tseih, Chi-I II and Kwang-fung, Yun-shu, Chiang Hsia-pias, I-lin, I-ching and Hui-wen who have left inscriptions to commemorate their visits and acts of merit. All these Chinese pilgrims came by the land-route, walking their way to India through "dust and desert." There came a number of others by the southern sea-route, I-tsing, a priest from China, two priests from Korea whose names are unknown, Mochadeva and Kwei-ching from Cochin China, Taoulin of Kao-chang (Turfan), Chi-'sze, Wou-hing and others. With the historical tradition of Bodh-Gayā have been associated lasting homages from such foreign kings as Devānampriya-

tishya and Meghavarṇa of Ceylon, His Imperial Majesty T'ai Tsung, the emperor of China and his immediate successor in the Great Sung dynasty, and the king of Upper Burma, Theinpyu-Thakin-tara-Mingyi, the lord of 10,000 Pyus.

The religious sentiment that prompted the band of pilgrims from China to undertake a perilous journey to India has found a permanent expression in the Hymn of Praise left behind by Chiang Hsia-pias, the relevant portion of which is cited below from the translation of Mr. Giles :

"To witness the source and wander over
the sphere of the Law
It was well to travel through dust and desert.
Bright, bright, without beginning or end ;
Dark, dark, breaking the chain of *nidāna* :
Dwelling on earth without becoming earthy :
Abiding in heaven without undergoing change ;
In this eulogium I utter the deepest words of my heart,
For I have at length met with the Immaculate Body."
"This shrine towers above the limits of the Trilokaya ;
Its shapely summit rests above the sky.
The *kalpa* of fire exercises no influence over it ;
On earth how should we seek to model its like ?
The reputation of King Aśoka extends afar :
He rested in wonderful perception of the doctrine.
A jewel among grains of sand,
Immortal, he will permeate the Great Void."
"No beginning, no birth, no death ;
All distracting influences at an end."[1]

[1] Cunningham's *Mahābodhi*, pp. 70-71.

19. APPENDIX

CHAITANYA'S PILGRIMAGE TO GAYĀ.

The Chaitanya-bhāgavata and the Chaitanya-charitāmṛita contain an interesting account of the pilgrimage of Chaitanya to the holy land of Gayā. The great Vaishṇava reformer of Bengal is said to have visited Gayā at the age of twenty-one and in the month of *Āśvin* of the Śaka-era **1430** (= A.D. 1508) as a devout Hindu pilgrim for offering *piṇḍas* to the spirits of his deceased forefathers. It is quite by accident that he met his *guru*, the Daśnāmī Śaiva ascetic Īśvarapurī, and offered *piṇḍas* together. He performed the whole round of duties enjoined upon a Hindu pilgrim and offered *piṇḍas* at sixteen sanctified sites within the holy land, Śiva-Gayā, Brahma-Gayā, Preta-Gayā (Pretagiri), Rāma-Gayā, Yudhishṭhira-Gayā, Bhīma-Gayā, Brahma Kuṇḍa, Vishṇupada, Uttara-mānasa, Dakshiṇa-mānasa, Gayāśira, and the rest. The Vaishṇava account refers to the Gayālis (Gayāwāls) as the gluttonous Brahmins who swallowed the rice-cakes as these were being offered on the selected spots.[1]

[1] Atul Krishna Mukherji's *Gayā-kāhiṇī* with a foreword by Pandit Jadaveswar Tarkaratna, pp. 283-289.

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8. BATHING PLACES IN GAYĀ

9. SACRED SITES IN GAYĀ

10. SHRINES AND OBJECTS OF WORSHIP